

FIVE CENTS

BRAVE AND BOLD

A DIFFERENT COMPLETE STORY EVERY WEEK

No. 69

SAVED FROM THE GALLOWS

OR
The Rescue of Charlie Armitage



BY
MATT ROYAL

Dick's eyes dropped on the row-boat. "Into it, quick!" he cried, "the three of you. I will run through the woods and take them off their track. You, captain, row to the cape point and meet me."

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A Different Complete Story Every Week

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SAVED FROM THE GALLOWS:

OR,

The Rescue of Charlie Armitage.

By MATT ROYAL.

CHAPTER I.

Mr. Beauchamp, the great millionaire lumberman, sat in his office as late as six o'clock on the evening on which our story opens. His clerks were all gone, and he was conversing privately with his solicitor, Mr. Walker. He was evidently considerably worried and perplexed.

"It's troubling me, Walker," he said, "because on the one hand, there is the danger of detection and on the other an appeal to my heart. 'For her father's sake,' Walker. Just think! What am I to do?"

"You've quite a bit of property in case of confiscation," said the shrewd man of law, smiling as he gave the hint. "If you ask me as a lawyer, I'd say, 'don't touch it. It's dangerous.'"

"Well, it's too bad," said Mr. Beauchamp. "I think of the tears and heart-broken sobs. You see, her father was a very dear friend of mine. She appeals to me on that ground, poor girl."

"Can't you get some one else?" suggested the lawyer. "Some one who has nothing to lose, who'll take your place?"

"It would have to be a man I could depend upon."

"Oh, certainly. Leave that to me. I have a man in mind. In fact, I've been preparing this very thing. All's ready. Do you agree?"

"You'll answer for him?"

The lawyer nodded and then rose from his chair and began to put on his gloves.

"Not only will I answer for him," he said firmly, "but I will arrange it so that you cannot possibly be compromised. I know the facts. I can save you the awkward trouble of explaining them." He stooped and looked meaningly into the millionaire's face. "I will send him to you at once, Mr. Beauchamp—a young man. He will come looking for work. You will engage him and say nothing, only give such few, simple orders as are necessary, and there you are. If you were both brought into court to-morrow it could not be proved you made such a bargain. In fact, you could not make a case against yourselves if you tried."

"Good," said Mr. Beauchamp, rising and taking his solicitor's hand. "I catch your idea. Send him along. Be careful."

The lawyer departed in a great hurry and the millionaire sat down to brood over the dangerous scheme.

"I have no wish to go to prison," thought he, "and the word confiscation frightens me. Walker's plan is feasible. I don't need to commit myself, even by a word."

He employed himself in writing for over an hour, and then rose from his chair to look out of one of the front office windows. Scarcely more than a quarter of a mile away the broad St. Lawrence River flowed majestically

along. The ground sloped down beautifully to its bank. Not a house was to be seen, and only a solitary tree, the latter on the bank, till he leaned through the open window and looked to his left. There, six hundred yards away, lay the village of Qu'Appelle, which drew its sustenance almost wholly from the great lumberman's operations. He had had his office built out here because he liked quiet and enjoyed the view of the broad sweep of the river, with the many vessels, some of them ocean steamers, passing on it.

It was a strange trick than chance now played on two people.

The millionaire, seeing a young man approaching from the direction of the village, retired from the window and reseated himself at his desk. Presently the door opened and the young man appeared.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, bowing and taking off his hat. "I am looking for work. I was told you might have something for me to do."

"Possibly," said Mr. Beauchamp, kindly, taking note of his appearance "What can you do?"

"I will try anything, sir, though I'm good at nothing in particular. In fact, it is possible you would find me useless, as I have never worked before. I have just come from the States. My father died not long ago in Montpelier, and I, after vainly trying to get employment there, came to Quebec, because I had heard that an old friend of my father's was there. It happened, however, that he, too, died not long ago, and thus I had my trip for nothing. I will be obliged if you can give me any kind of work."

The millionaire smiled, despite his great mental worry. Walker, his lawyer, had made it quite easy for him, he thought. He liked the looks of this young man, and, better still, he liked his address. He began to have hopes that he could really get the difficult and dangerous work done without compromising himself.

It never struck him that Walker and this young man had not yet seen each other; that the latter had just arrived in the village for the first time and did not know a soul in it, and that his appearance on the scene now was a pure accident—a trick of chance.

"What is your name?" asked Mr. Beauchamp, after he had surveyed the tall, well-knit, athletic figure and the finely chiseled face, lighted by the honest gray-blue eyes, and had noticed that the dress, though plain and much the worse for wear, hung on him like a gentleman's.

"Richard Nesbitt," said the stranger. "I am twenty years of age, and was at school all my life till last year, when father failed in business. So you see I know little about work."

"Walker has good judgment. I can trust this candid young man," thought Mr. Beauchamp, and then, rising from his chair, he said aloud:

"Yes, I can employ you. Come to the office this time to-morrow evening."

"But, sir——" began Nesbitt, with a disappointed look.

"Your wages will begin at once," said the mill owner. "Leave that matter to me. I am in a hurry now. You are engaged."

Nesbitt was going to say something, when, seeing his new employer was about to leave the office in a hurry, he picked up his hat and started to the door.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "I'll be here at this hour to-morrow."

Mr. Beauchamp watched him till he had walked half-way to the village.

"Clearly a gentleman," he muttered, and then, having locked his office, he set out for the village himself. He first went to his residence, and later strolled up to the home of his solicitor to tell him he was well satisfied with the choice he had made, and to get from him all the information he possessed concerning the young man's antecedents. "It is well to know all about one who may come to hold my life in his hands—or at the very least my liberty and my reputation," he said to himself.

He rang the bell of his solicitor's front door, and when it was opened asked to see Mr. Walker.

He got a surprise. Events were helping blind chance. "Oh, it's you, Mr. Beauchamp!" said the maid, confused in the presence of the great lumber king. "Mr. Walker's gone away, sir. Just went half an hour ago. Called to Quebec by telegraph, sir. Won't be back to-night. Told me to give you this note, sir."

Mr. Beauchamp took the note and departed. It read as follows:

"Have sent the young man to you. I have explained the case to him so that you need not compromise yourself by even a word. I instructed him not to mention these things to you—that everything was to be silently understood between you—and that, while he should obey you implicitly, he was to act as if he did not understand. I think you can trust him. I am told so by one whom I trust."
WALKER."

"Very good," thought Mr. Beauchamp, "I, too, think I can trust him, and that's everything in this affair. He may save my good name—ay, save me from a prison—from ruin—if the thing comes. But it may not come. I hope and pray it does not happen. She may—— What a wonderful woman she is—a mere girl, and so beautiful! I wonder if Walker told the young man that in case of danger it must be he who goes to prison and not I?"

He went to his home, there to stay for the rest of the evening.

About the time he did so a short, stout, red-haired young man knocked on the door of the Beauchamp office, but for reasons we know, failed to gain admittance.

He was the young man sent by Mr. Walker.

"Late again," he muttered. "I'm going to make a bungle of it, as sure as my name is Briggs. Just my luck!"

CHAPTER II.

The noon mail of the following day brought to Millionaire Beauchamp a letter that greatly disturbed him. He had hard work to conceal his excitement and perturbation from his clerks.

"Heavens!" he muttered. "It has come. She has begun it without a word. I am now committed."

In the evening he dismissed his clerks nearly half an hour earlier than usual. He wanted them out of the way. A little later a knock fell on the door. The visitor was Richard Nesbitt. He started on seeing his new employer. The latter had been seated at his desk with his head bowed

on his extended arms. He leaped to his feet on seeing the young man.

"Ah, it's you, Nesbitt? You must act quickly," he said, hurriedly. "You must stand between this trouble and me."

"I hope you're not in great trouble, sir," said Dick. "I'm ready to perform any service you name."

"Then go at once to the eastern wall——"

"The what, sir?" exclaimed Dick in surprise.

"Come here," said Mr. Beauchamp, leading him into the back room and to a window looking out to the south. "Look! You see yonder high wall?"

"I do," said the young man. "The large building enclosed within is evidently——"

"Hush! No need of words. You have work to do. Go there immediately. Search the ground along near the wall."

"Search the ground, sir?"

"Yes, and fetch me whatever you may find."

"May I ask what you expect, sir?"

"Never mind that. You and I must not talk. Fetch me any object you may find there. See—about fifteen feet from the southeast corner yonder—yet pretty close to the wall. Hurry. Anything you may find."

Dick was too surprised to speak, even if his employer's manner had permitted it. He rushed to the door and was going down the steps when Mr. Beauchamp called out after him:

"Let no one see you. Anything you may find—quick!"

"Well, this is an odd mission," thought Dick, as he hurried toward a large stone building surrounded by a high stone wall that was situated some little distance back of the village on a hill. "My employer seems an eccentric man."

As he neared the place he wondered whether it were a jail or an asylum. It was certainly one or the other, for its windows were iron-barred and it had that appearance that suggests people under restraint.

Having climbed the hill he hurried down to the southeast corner of the wall and began to search the grass in the vicinity. He kept as close as possible to the wall, lest he should be seen by some one from the inside, though why he should not be seen he could not guess. One angle of the building came within a few yards of the corner; on the opposite side there seemed to be a large area of yard and there was another and much smaller building, presumably a residence. He saw nothing in the grass, though he went the whole length of the east side of the wall. Looking down the hill toward the river he saw Mr. Beauchamp's office, standing proudly alone, and descried an individual walking hurriedly toward it.

He continued his search and was rewarded only by finding an empty and discarded salmon can and a broken eggshell, two things that he could not deem to be of any use. He hurried back down the hill.

When he arrived in front of the office he saw a young man of about twenty-five years of age with a dissatisfied, if not disconsolate, look on his face, walking away. The latter had been knocking on the office door and had failed to gain admittance, or even attention. Nesbitt felt sure the man was annoyed, for he heard him muttering to himself as he trudged off toward the village. He was red-haired.

Dick was surprised to find the office door locked, but almost immediately it opened and Mr. Beauchamp ap-

peared. The poor man looked more than worried this time. He was frightened.

"Come in, quickly," he cried, catching Dick by the shoulder. He almost dragged him in.

"Have you found anything?" he asked.

"No," answered Dick; "nothing."

Mr. Beauchamp seemed relieved. His face instantly brightened. He sat down in a chair, and, drawing his handkerchief from his pocket, mopped his brow. His excitement had made him perspire profusely.

"Yes," said Dick, "I searched thoroughly and found nothing——"

"Just so. I am glad—very glad."

"Except——"

"Except what?" cried Mr. Beauchamp, looking up quickly. "What is it?"

"Oh, nothing, sir. There was absolutely nothing except an empty salmon can and a broken eggshell."

Mr. Beauchamp leaped to his feet, almost upsetting his chair and quite startling Dick.

"Good heavens!" he cried. "Did you say an eggshell?"

The perspiration was now rolling in beads down his face.

"Yes, sir," said the astonished youth. "There's a broken eggshell there, but surely——"

"Go and fetch it at once," cried Mr. Beauchamp. "Quick! It's it, sure. An eggshell? Why, of course. Run," and he almost dragged Dick to the door. "Go fetch it immediately. Don't lose it," he added.

"Do you really mean, sir, that——" began Dick, smiling, thinking the gentleman was momentarily demented.

"Fetch that eggshell immediately. There may be a human life depending on it. Oh, don't break it. Stop," he added, as Dick reached the door. "Did you examine the salmon can?"

"I did happen to pick it up, sir. It was empty."

"Fetch it; but secure the eggshell at any cost. Let no one see you."

"By the way, sir," said Dick, as he was coming out, "I saw a man knocking at your door a moment ago."

"I know. Go on. Be quick!"

As he came down the steps, Dick heard Mr. Beauchamp locking the door and muttering to himself inside.

"Good gracious!" he thought. "Am I employed by a madman?" He hurried toward the hill. "Did anyone ever hear of such duties as gathering eggshells and——Heavens! A life depending on it! What can it mean? I declare, it's low comedy and high tragedy mixed."

While climbing the hill he broke into soliloquy again, for the whole thing was so astounding that it had him in a heat of bewilderment and excitement.

"And the strangest part," he muttered, "is that when I told him I found nothing he was relieved and apparently much pleased; whereas, when I mentioned the eggshell he seemed frightened, yet wanted to secure it. Blamed if it isn't interesting, anyhow. I'm going to see it through."

Arrived at the top of the hill, he saw a man in uniform pacing up and down with his hands behind his back, some distance beyond the farthest corner of the wall. He was attached, no doubt, to the building inside. The wall was about fifteen feet high, so that it was impossible to see if there were other similarly uniformed men there.

It struck Dick that it might be as well not to let this

man catch sight of him, let alone see him picking something up. He got behind a tree, and waited there till the man walked out of sight behind the wall.

It did not take long to secure the can and the eggshell and stick the latter into the former so that it might not get broken. Hiding them under his coat he started back.

When he got near the office again he saw Mr. Beauchamp at a back window looking out at him with his face as pale as a ghost. He hurried to the front door, and there Mr. Beauchamp met him, unlocking it for him and almost helping him in as before.

"Did you get it?" he cried.

"Yes, sir," said Dick, and he handed the articles to him when he had relocked the door.

"Turn on the lights, and pull down the blinds," said Mr. Beauchamp, for it was now about dark.

Dick hastily obeyed and then turned round to behold the strangest and most amazing scene he had ever witnessed in his life.

Mr. Beauchamp had drawn the eggshell from the can, and seated himself at his desk to examine it, his eyeglass firmly set on his nose.

There was silence for some moments; deep, intense silence, that made the ticking of the clock sound preternaturally loud. The effect was strikingly dramatic. To Dick, listening and watching, it seemed that a great heart tragedy was about to be enacted; that the first act of a powerful, stirring drama, involving conflicting motives, contrasting characters, and scenes, and sighs, and sobs, and hopes, and fears was about to begin. There was that in Mr. Beauchamp's attitude, look and manner that foreshadowed it.

"Good heavens! This is ruin!" he exclaimed, as he stared at the empty eggshell with his eyes almost bulging from their sockets.

CHAPTER III.

To say that Dick was astonished would be putting it mildly. He sat down on an office chair, and stared in silence at the excited man, who was so critically examining the eggshell.

He had first thought that Mr. Beauchamp might be partly demented, but the longer he knew him the more certain he felt the man was in full possession of all his mental faculties, or, if he was mad, there was "method in his madness." He acted very strangely, to be sure, but there must be some cause for it all.

"Good heavens, Nesbitt!" he cried, again looking up from the eggshell, and glancing nervously around. "I tell you this is awful—awful. The blow is going to fall, and I can't escape it. What shall I do?"

"I hope there's going to be no trouble for you, sir," said Dick, rising.

"Trouble!" echoed the excited man. "Ah, my boy, you'll have to bear the brunt of it. You must shield me. You have no name and business to lose, as I have."

These words caused Dick to feel uncomfortable.

"I'll do all I can for you, sir," he said, "but——"

"I know. Of course you will," interrupted Mr. Beauchamp. "Of course you will, and I, on my part, will do all I can to keep you out of prison. Indeed I will."

"Prison!" exclaimed Dick, turning pale, and inclining again to the theory of madness. "Prison, sir!"

"Ah! but we won't talk of that, Nesbitt, although it's only one of the dangers. You are even more liable to be shot. No doubt they'd shoot if the alarm was given; but you must take chances."

Dick rose to his feet again. He did not know whether to bolt out of the doorway or not. Curiosity and the sight of the man's obvious trouble of mind prompted him to remain.

"Tell me, sir——" he began.

"Hush! don't speak for a moment," said Mr. Beauchamp. "I will reward you well for your share in this. You are really protecting me. Here are my post office keys. Run quickly to the office and see whether there are any letters for me. They may post one at some town along the river."

Off went Dick again, Mr. Beauchamp locking the door after him as before. He was on a sensible errand this time, and had more chance to think quietly. Mr. Beauchamp had just said one thing that made Dick feel like being reconciled to his new, but peculiar, situation. It was the words: "You are really protecting me, Nesbitt." Dick was kind-hearted, and he thought if he could in any way be of service to his worried employer he would like to help him. He had received instructions what box to open at the post office.

While he was in the building he saw the red-haired young man whom he had noticed knocking at Mr. Beauchamp's door about an hour before. The latter was a stout, bullock-necked individual, with a broad, shrewd, freckled face and reddish-brown eyes. His hair was a carrotty red. He was anything but good-looking.

He was, as the reader knows, Mr. Walker's appointee for the unique position now being so capably filled by Dick. He saw Dick and seemed to take an interest in him. This interest was intensified by his apparent knowledge that it was Mr. Beauchamp's post office box that Dick was opening.

It is likely he had already seen Dick entering the millionaire's office. Whether or not, he now watched him, and, when Dick left the post office, he quietly followed.

It was now quite dark. As Dick had been told to hurry, he broke into a little run as soon as he got clear of the village, thinking it was not likely that anyone would notice him. He was not aware that the red-haired youth was following him.

Arrived at Mr. Beauchamp's office door, he rapped lightly twice, as he had been bidden to do, and was quickly admitted, Mr. Beauchamp attending to the locking of the door with his usual care.

"Have you brought any letters with you, Nesbitt?" asked the latter, anxiously.

"Yes, sir," said Dick, "I have one and a package."

He had already noticed that they were both in the same handwriting, and bore the same postmark—"Tadoussac."

Mr. Beauchamp seized the letter and sat down at the table to read it. The light shone directly on his face, and Dick was able to see the play of his features.

For the next minute or two he presented a curious psychological study. Having drawn the letter from its envelope, he glanced over it and immediately became more excited than ever. His face twitched convulsively, and his eyes opened wide in a stare, as if he was horrified.

"Good gracious! What can be worrying him so?" thought Dick.

He felt real pity for the poor man. The latter had forced him to take five dollars in advance of salary when he was leaving for the post office, and he knew, whatever faults he had, lack of generosity was not one of them. He was kind, too, in his way of speaking, and had already shown a liking for Dick. Altogether, Dick felt very sorry for him in his trouble; so sorry, indeed, that he could not forbear mentioning it.

"Really, I sympathize with you, Mr. Beauchamp," he began.

"Hush!" cried the latter, excitedly, leaping from his chair and tearing the letter into shreds. "Don't talk, Nesbitt, don't talk. It has come. They have arrived by this time. I'm worried to death. Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

He began to pace up and down the office floor, wringing his hands and muttering to himself, while poor Dick stood watching him like a frightened schoolboy.

"I tell you what it is, Nesbitt," he said, suddenly turning, laying his hands on Dick's shoulders, and looking into his astonished face, "you must not forsake me, my boy, now that this trouble has come upon me."

"Indeed, I will not," said Dick, warmly.

"I knew it. Walker was right. Look here, my boy."

"Well, sir?"

"There are things you and I must not talk about. We must not even mention them to each other, as we might afterwards be questioned under oath—ah, what am I saying?"

In truth, Dick hardly knew what he was saying. It was astonishing language.

"See, Nesbitt," continued the excited man, "I understand your thoughts and you know mine."

"I'll be darned if I do," parenthetically mused Dick.

"So, we'll not mention the subject again," resumed Mr. Beauchamp. "Now, let me tell you, the time is come. That letter says so. There is no longer any escape. We have put our hands to the plow, and must go on."

"Very well, sir," said Dick, more amazed than he ever was in his life.

"Are you ready, then?"

"I am, sir."

"Very well. Wait a moment."

Mr. Beauchamp walked quietly to a corner of the room, opened a cupboard and searched for something. Presently he found it, for he returned to Dick, and, laying one of his hands on the lad's shoulder, said: "This is the most important errand of all. I prepared for it while you were at the post office. You will go down the river bank a distance of just eight hundred yards from the tree which you see out yonder. You may count a thousand steps of your own, if you wish."

"Eight hundred yards to the right?" asked Dick.

"Exactly. You will find a solitary oak tree, like this one in front of our office. It stands on the river bank. You will go to it cautiously. Take care no one sees you, and lay behind it, on the ground, this article."

Here he handed Dick a little piece of birch bark, and, repeating his instructions, added the request that Dick would make all possible haste to the spot.

"What this will lead to, Nesbitt," he said, "I don't know. Should anyone see you and speak to you, be care-

ful. You will tell me all when you return. Go. I'll wait anxiously."

Dick snatched up his hat, and in another moment was making his way rapidly toward the nearest tree on the river bank.

CHAPTER IV.

The moon had just risen and the night promised to be a very bright one. There was not a cloud in the sky. The air was calm and the waters of the broad St. Lawrence flowed peacefully along.

Reaching the tree, Dick set off to the right on a line parallel with the river. He counted his steps carefully, for the reason that, between him and the place of his destination, there were two or three small bits of bush. It was safe to follow directions.

Passing the last bit of bush, he saw that he was to have no further trouble. The tree which marked the terminus of his journey stood out prominently in the distance. There were no other trees within a quarter of a mile of it, nor was there a house within twice that distance.

It was, indeed, a lonely place.

Drawing nearer to it, he saw that it stood very close to the river on a piece of uneven ground. Behind it the ground sloped upward to a pretty high hill which was partly wooded. Away beyond it he noticed that a point of land ran out into the water. On this jutting piece of land was a thick bit of bush sufficient to conceal any bay or inlet that might be behind it. As a matter of fact, there was a bay behind it; but that fact did not interest Dick at the time. Indeed, he was not aware of it.

When he saw that there was no chance of making a mistake in the tree, he quit counting his footsteps, and made toward it more rapidly, taking care at the same time to make himself as little noticeable as possible in case there should be some one in the vicinity.

His curiosity was greatly excited. He wondered and wondered what was on the bark, but his sense of honor would not let him read it. He was a youth of stern principles.

When he arrived within twenty yards of the tree he found he was in a good place for concealment. In fact, there were many such places in the neighborhood. He looked all about him. He could see nothing but the tree, gently rising little knolls, or miniature hills, here and there, the high hill to the south, the wooded promontory to the east, and a few lights coming from houses away back near the village of Qu'Appelle. He also saw a couple of lights out on the river, one near, the other pretty far away. But they had no attraction for him.

"Now, let me see," he thought, and he began mentally to review his instructions.

Surely, of all the queer occupations a newly employed person ever had, his was the queerest. He did plenty of conjecturing and surmising. It would make a saint laugh, he thought, if it were not for the almost tragic elements involved—Mr. Beauchamp's terror, excitement and mental worry.

"What does he mean by my understanding him?" Dick asked himself, and then, giving it all up as an insoluble puzzle, he advanced toward the tree. He stood listening near it a moment, and could hear no sound.

"Now for my ridiculous errand," he said, and he deposited the innocent piece of birch bark on the ground near the tree on the side next the river. He stood looking at it, wondering if anyone would happen to pick it up if he should come along, and wondering if it was not intended that some one should pick it up. Though he waited a while, no one put in an appearance. He would have liked to wait longer, for his curiosity was at fever heat, but it was not fair to his employer. He turned and rapidly walked away from the tree, directing his course homeward. But after he had descended one of the little knolls, where the tree was no longer in sight, he stopped, a thought having struck him.

"I believe I'll set that bark closer to the tree," he muttered. "Some chance passer-by might pick it up—I wonder what the deuce it means, anyhow?"

So he started back toward the tree.

Influenced to an extent, perhaps, and against his will, by curiosity, he felt more or less nervous as he reascended the knoll, for he could not rid himself of the impression that there was some human being in the neighborhood. Indeed, he felt some one had been watching him. He came in sight of the big tree again, and saw no one. But when he approached closer and was just about to go around on the river side of it, he was startled by the sight of a person standing quite close to the tree on the side the most remote from the knoll.

It was a woman. She heard his footstep even before she saw him, and was startled.

She stepped back from the tree, and uttered a little cry.

"Don't be afraid, madam," said Dick, quietly, raising his hat. "I am sorry I frightened you. I did not know there was anyone here," and he glanced quickly around, hardly believing that the woman was alone. He saw no one else, however.

"Oh, sir," she exclaimed, "whom am I speaking to? Is it——"

"I'm Richard Nesbitt, madam; in the employ of Mr. Beauchamp. He sent me here." He had already noticed that she held the bit of birch bark in her hand.

"Oh, indeed! Can it be so?" she cried, and she hurried out from the tree and seized his hands. "It is a friend, then, I am sure."

Dick was too astonished to speak. If an apparition had appeared before him he could not have been more at a loss what to say.

But it was not alone the surprise of meeting her that rendered him tongue-tied; it was the appearance of the woman herself.

Clothed in a long, dark cloak with a hood, that was sufficiently open in front to reveal a rich dress underneath, she presented an appearance that it is not often given mortals to have the pleasure of seeing. She was the most beautiful woman Dick had ever beheld. The moonlight was sufficiently strong to show him that. She was a large woman, and her face was full, while the cloak itself could not conceal the beauty of her perfect figure. She would have had a coquettish look, no doubt, but for the circumstances that had led to her being there and the little start of fright which Dick's sudden appearance gave her. As it was, the expression of her face denoted trouble and anxiety, and there was a rich pathos in her voice that appealed to the chivalry of the young man. She was of his own age, or perhaps a year older.

"Yes, a friend," said Dick, at length, when he recovered from the shock which the sight of her beauty had given him.

"Friend! Oh, thank you!" she exclaimed, warmly, again shaking his hand. "Oh, you will not desert me, will you?"

"Desert you?" said Dick.

"Yes. You will not leave me to fight the battle alone. Swear, please; swear you'll help me," she cried, impulsively, and then Dick did a strange thing. Without knowing what it meant, he swore he would serve the lady and not desert her till she had accomplished what she had in view. He was carried away by the enthusiasm caused by her beauty, her evident distress and her impassioned appeal.

"I see you have the message I brought," he said, pointing to the bit of bark in her hand. "But, pardon me, I don't think it was intended I should speak to you."

"No," she said, "I know it was not, but——"

"May I ask how you knew?" said Dick.

"By this," she replied, holding up the birch bark, and at the same time revealing a dark lantern she carried in an inner pocket of her cloak.

"Oh!" exclaimed Dick, to whom the mystery was greater than ever.

"The matter was left to me," she said. "This says you are to be trusted. Will you come with me?"

"Ah, I understand. My employer left it with you as to whether I should go?"

"Exactly," she said, quickly. "He left it with me to invite you if I saw fit."

"Then I will go, madam; if I can be of any use."

They started eastward along the river bank, the girl keeping strangely silent save for a couple of questions referring to the nearest places. Dick kept silent because his employer had bidden him to be careful, and he was treading an unknown path.

They walked fast over the uneven ground, the woman keeping a couple of paces in advance, Dick watching her admirable carriage. He continued to glance about him to see if there were others near at hand, for he still had the impression the woman could not have come far alone. Where she was now taking him or what she wanted him to do he had no idea. He went because he believed it would please Mr. Beauchamp—it seemed a logical sequence to the peculiar things the man had asked him to do—and also because his late vow seemed to demand it.

As he watched his own and the lady's shadow flitting over the ground, and occasionally reaching out to the water, he felt a vague sense of uneasiness. There seemed to be something uncanny about it all. The mystery surrounding it defied his comprehension, yet stirred his curiosity and aroused his love of adventure. He thought not of going back till the lady would suggest it.

Presently she stopped short, as if struck by a sudden idea, and, laying her hand on Dick's arm, said:

"Oh, I forgot. No doubt neither you nor Mr. Beauchamp knew it."

"Well?" said Dick, seeing that she had paused and was looking at him.

"Mr. Livingston has arrived on the scene. He just got here to-night. He has offered his services."

"Yes?" said Dick, interrogatively, not knowing what to

say, and not understanding what she meant. He had promised Mr. Beauchamp to be cautious in his speech.

"You might see him for me," continued the lady. "Somehow, I am a little afraid of him. I can hardly refuse his proffered services as he was Charlie's old friend."

"I'll see him for you," said Dick, firmly, moved by a chivalrous impulse.

Without speaking the lady moved on, and Dick followed her.

Presently they came to the end of the little belt of woods that ran out on the promontory.

"Samuel," she called, in a low voice. To Dick's surprise, there stepped from behind a clump of bushes a man and a middle-aged woman.

"Samuel," continued the young lady, "you will conduct Mr. Nesbitt to Mr. Livingston, and introduce him. We will go on to the boat."

Without another word she took the arm of the other lady, and the two walked westward, leaving Dick with the man she had addressed as Samuel, a short, stout, sailor-looking individual.

"Follow me, sir," said the latter, and he led Dick into the bush in the direction of the point of the promontory. They threaded their way fully two hundred yards, when suddenly, in a little cleared part of the bush, they came face to face with three men, who, at the sound of their footsteps, had arisen from a seat they had occupied on a fallen tree.

"This is Mr. Livingston, Mr. Nesbitt," said Samuel, and, in the moonlight, just out of the dark shadows of the trees, Dick found himself bowing to a tall, dark-complexioned man, whom, at the first glance, he was obliged instinctively to dislike and mistrust.

"May I ask who you are and what you have to do with this enterprise?" said Livingston, casting his dark eyes on Dick's face. He spoke curtly, if not gruffly.

Something told Dick, and told him correctly, that this dark, evil-faced man was to be his mortal enemy from the start; that they were to wage a war of life and death almost from that moment; and that, in this war, his rival would be supported by the two scoundrelly looking figures now standing behind him and scowling at Dick.

CHAPTER V.

Dick was too angry to return an answer to the man's insolent question. He stood for a moment surveying him from head to foot, and wondering who he was and what connection he had with the lady or Beauchamp.

Livingston returned his stare with all the wicked fire of his black eyes. He was a tall, broad-shouldered, strong-looking man, with a long, clean-shaven face. He was fashionably dressed and carried a heavy cane. The men behind him looked like sailors. They were evidently in his employ, for they stood as if ready to obey his orders, and regarded Dick with a half-cynical, half-amused expression.

"I have no answer to make," said Dick, sharply. "There has been a mistake." He turned to Sam. "Come, we'll go back," he said. "I don't wish to have anything to do with this man."

"Just wait," said Livingston, in a more civil tone; "I want to know——"

"You'll know nothing from me," replied Dick, and he caught Sam's arm and started back through the bush.

"Who are these men?" he asked, when he had gone a few steps.

"I don't know," said Sam. "The lady may tell you."

Dick heard footsteps behind him. Looking back, he saw Livingston and the two sailors following as if they would overtake and stop him.

"Bring me to the lady quickly," he said to Sam.

"Better walk fast, sir," said Sam. "I think the gentleman is in bad humor."

It was evidently going to be a race through the bush. Dick almost ran and yet he succeeded in keeping only about the same distance from the others. Sam remained by his side.

When they got to the end of the bush, Dick turned to the left.

"If I were you I would go back, sir," said Sam.

"Back where?" asked Dick.

"To the village, sir. I think there's been a misunderstanding. Maybe it's better to wait till Livingston finds out who you are."

"But the lady——" began Dick.

"Oh, she's all right, sir. She's out in the boat by this time."

"Perhaps you're right," said Dick, hearing the footsteps of the three men only a few yards away among the trees. He bade Sam good-night and walked rapidly toward the tree where he had first met the lady. He heard voices calling after him to stop, but he kept on, and when he got to the tree he saw that the three men had ceased to pursue him. A few minutes later he reached the little bit of bush through which he had to pass to get to Mr. Beauchamp's office. He stopped and looked back.

"Well, I declare," he muttered. "The events of to-night are beyond my comprehension. Who is this Livingston? Why did he show such hostility to me? Can he be a friend of the lady's?"

It was certainly a surprising thing that had happened. The lady had asked him to see Livingston, and, lo! the latter had treated him as an enemy, and had acted so threateningly that even Sailor Sam advised Dick to go away. It was all a mystery. The very way he encountered these men was a mystery. He looked out onto the river, and saw the lights of a vessel near the point of the wooded cape. No sign of the men could he see at all.

Glad to be rid of them, he started homeward again. As he drew near the solitary tree standing in front of the office he saw a figure standing on the river bank, evidently watching him. He was just in that state of curiosity that he desired to know who the person was. He walked on, keeping near the bank, and, within a few feet of the tree, encountered the red-haired young man he had seen in the post office.

"Good-night," said the latter.

Dick responded to the salutation civilly, and passed on, going up the slope toward Mr. Beauchamp's office.

"Ho, ho!" muttered the red-haired man, looking after him, "this is going to make a queer mixture."

He waited till Dick had got quite a distance away, and then turned and ran at a fast rate along the river bank toward the bush from which Dick had just come. He did not pause to look back, but kept on till he reached

the place where our hero had parted from Sam. He stopped and uttered a low whistle. Receiving no answer, he was about to walk into the bush toward the point of the cape, when he heard a voice calling somewhere away to the right, which was in the direction the two ladies had gone. He set off at a run, and in a few moments reached the river, that is, where the cape ended. Here two men were standing on the bank, and another was seated in a rowboat, which was drawn up in the little sheltered bay.

"That you, Briggs?" said one of the men, stepping out to meet him.

"Yes, Mr. Livingston," answered the red-haired young man. "I've hurried here to tell you that—oh, I'm out of breath with the running—I'm glad to see you here again, sir. I got your letters all right, and——"

"Who the deuce is that fellow called Nesbitt?" asked Livingston, coming closer to him, and at the same time making a sign to his companion, at which the latter walked away where he could not overhear.

"That's just it, Mr. Livingston," whispered Briggs. "I came to tell you. I don't know who the fellow is, but I know he's doing my work."

"It staggered me after what Walker wrote me," said Livingston. "He must be a spy."

"He's gone to Beauchamp's office, anyhow," said Briggs. "I tried to get in and couldn't."

"Did you tell Walker?"

"No. He's away."

"Well, this is an awkward thing. That fellow is in our way. See here, Briggs."

"Yes, Mr. Livingston."

"You've got to get into his place."

"I'm trying to, sir; but can't see either Beauchamp or Walker."

"How did he come to be mixed up with it?"

"I can't tell you, sir. He was simply there ahead of me. Walker appointed me yesterday."

"Confound him. I shouldn't have let him get away. Here, Briggs, you get back to the village as quickly as you can. Keep your eyes open and see either Beauchamp or Walker, first chance. Besides——"

"Yes, sir."

"Get that fellow out to see me if you can. I'm going to try and see him myself, but may fail."

A few minutes later Briggs was hurrying back toward the village, and Livingston was being rowed by his two sailors out into the river. The boat followed the line of the cape almost to the point and then shot out in another direction, where there shone some lights from a vessel at anchor. Some one on the deck of the vessel saw the rowboat approaching, and leaned over the rail. He was an old man, and wore the uniform of a captain.

"I want to see the ladies," called out Livingston, in a low voice.

"They have retired for the night," replied the captain, civilly, yet with a lack of cordiality.

"It's very important. I must see them."

The captain paused a while before replying. He even stepped back from the rail and whispered in through the open window of a cabin. Presently he returned to the rail, and said, in a whisper:

"Very sorry, Mr. Livingston, but not to-night. I was requested to thank you, however."

"Very well," said Livingston. "I'm sorry for troubling. Good-night."

The rowboat started back for land. Before it had gone a dozen yards Livingston muttered a string of deep curses, and availed himself of the darkness to shake his fist at the vessel.

"Growler," he said, to one of his sailors, "that new card they call Nesbitt is a danger to me."

"Blessed if I can make out who he is," said one of the rowers.

"I'm that way myself, Hank," said Livingston. "But I smell danger from him. You and Growler have to capture him, dead or alive, for me. I'm not playing with the gallows' cord for nothing."

"No, you bet, sir," said the Growler.

"And I think enough of my life to save it at the expense of half a dozen, if necessary. Isn't that sensible, Growler? Eh, Hank? You fellows would think the same."

A fierce, strong-minded, passionate man was the speaker. He had well expressed himself when he said he was playing with the gallows' cord. His struggle now was with the gallows, and lives had to fall before his own could be saved. He spoke once again before the boat touched shore.

"Listen, men," he said. "This new man, Nesbitt—I read his face. He's going to bring me to the gallows if he lives."

"What, sir!" exclaimed Hank and the Growler, in a breath.

"I said, if he lives. It's your work, now, to attend to him at once. Forty-eight hours hence may be too late."

The oars were dropped a moment, and the boat stopped.

Its three occupants joined hands and swore an oath in the darkness—a terrible oath. It would have chilled the blood of innocent Dick Nesbitt if he had heard it. He had unwittingly crossed the lion's path.

CHAPTER VI.

It is remarkable what a prominent part is played in the lives of men by circumstances and blind chance.

Mr. Walker, the solicitor, arrived home in Qu'Appelle that night on the eleven-thirty train. He was not feeling well. His heart, for some time, had been giving him trouble. When he alighted at the station he thought of calling a cab—there were a few cabs in Qu'Appelle—though the distance to his home was not great, but that night—as blind chance would have it—there was none to meet the midnight train. He was thus obliged to walk home. The exertion of climbing a little hill and an accidental fall on the sidewalk caused his heart to beat so that by the time he reached his home he was well-nigh exhausted.

But this was not all. He was destined to have the additional excitement of a late visitor.

About five minutes after he got home, a tall, athletic man, with a vigorous stride, might have been seen walking along the river bank toward Mr. Walker's house. He had purposely delayed his journey to a very late hour, as he was not anxious to have any of the inhabitants of Qu'Appelle see him. Indeed, there were reasons why he did not care to be seen in the village. He moved quickly, but stealthily, along till he came to the solicitor's porch.

He was pleased to see a light inside. He rang the bell. Mr. Walker himself came to the door.

"What! you, Mr. Livingston?" he cried. "Come in," and his heart palpitated so that he hastened to take a chair near his visitor.

After the first greetings were over, Livingston said:

"Walker, you handled my little case for me, and I have confidence in you. I know you're an honest man. I paid you, didn't I?"

"Yes, yes, Mr. Livingston; certainly."

"Well, now, I thought you would oblige me."

"Indeed, I would," said Mr. Walker, who had ever been simple enough to regard the other as an honest man. "Oblige you? Yes, indeed."

"Well, now," said Livingston, "you know I'm in this affair heart and soul. I want to help her, I want to help him. I thought you'd oblige me. Did you get my letter asking you to appoint Briggs?"

"I did, and I appointed him, knowing he is honest—just as you said in your letter."

"You appointed him!" cried Livingston, rising from his chair. "Then, what is this strange fellow, Nesbitt, doing in Briggs' place?"

Honest Mr. Walker's heart began to beat tumultuously.

"What do you mean?" he gasped. He was in that state of weakness that makes small matters seem of great importance to one.

Livingston quickly explained matters. Briggs, he said, had been shut out by a young stranger named Nesbitt.

"You must send word to Beauchamp," he then said, "at once."

"Ah, you must do it yourself," said Mr. Walker, with his hand to his heart. "I am not feeling very well. I could not go out again to-night."

"You know I dare not go to Beauchamp," pursued the relentless Livingston. "Nor yet dare I face anyone in the village. You must attend to it."

Mr. Walker staggered to his feet, and fell across a sofa. The excitement had proved too much for him.

Ten minutes later he had died from heart disease.

This did not prevent the ruthless Livingston from seeking to carry out his designs that night. He left the house, and stood a few minutes on the river bank, thinking.

"What am I to do?" he muttered. "How am I to get rid of this man, Nesbitt, and put Briggs in his place? I'll have to see Briggs himself. It's well he informed me as to his boarding house."

He turned and made his way toward the central part of the village, taking care that no one should see him.

* * * * *

About the same time, Dick Nesbitt was preparing to go to bed in his new boarding house, to which he had moved from a hotel in the afternoon. He had been kept out of bed for a hour or more by the noise of some of the other boarders, which, owing to the thin partitions, came to his ears. There were a great many of them. Indeed, he was prepared to believe what the landlady had told him—that she accommodated over three-fourths of the boarders in the village. As yet he had not seen any of them. He had entered his room but twice, and had met only the landlady.

After the talking had ceased he was annoyed by the man

who occupied the room next to him, who insisted upon whistling. In time, however, the whistling ceased. A step sounded in the hall, and a knock fell on the whistler's door. Some talking followed, which showed that Dick's next neighbor had a midnight visitor.

Now, Dick was not given to eavesdropping.

He would have gone to sleep if he had been able, or if a peculiar thing had not happened. All of a sudden he heard his own name mentioned in the next room.

He sat up with a start. Had his ears deceived him? He listened intently. Presently he caught a voice from the other room, saying:

"His name is Nesbitt. That's all I know. How he got into my place I can't tell."

"Well, look here," said another voice; "you've got to tell Beauchamp that Nesbitt has got to be put out of that position, and you put in at once. You are necessary to my plans. I'll pay you as I did for your work at the trial."

"Whew!" muttered Dick. "What's this?"

He crept cautiously out of bed, stole over to the wall, and listened. What he heard during the next two minutes astonished him beyond all he had ever heard in his life.

The speakers were one Briggs and the man Livingston, whom he had met in the bush. From snatches of their talk which he caught, it appeared that he (Dick) had got the situation intended for Briggs; that Mr. Beauchamp did not know this; that Mr. Walker had thought Briggs honest; that Briggs was a mere tool of Livingston's; that there was some dreadful plot on hand; that that plot required Briggs still to be put in Dick's place, and that, as Mr. Walker had just died, Briggs himself was to warn Mr. Beauchamp. The new obstacle, Nesbitt, must be quickly got out of the way, at any cost, and by any means.

But, while Dick overheard this much, the main mystery was to him deeper and darker than ever. He put his ear closer to the wall and held his breath.

"Look here," he heard Livingston say, "where does this Nesbitt board? Could we get at him to-night?"

The words and the tone in which they were uttered were those of a man who would stop at nothing to effect his purpose.

"I don't know," answered Briggs. "He's only come to the village. I couldn't find him again after I left you, although I walked up and down the streets till eleven."

"Do you suppose he knows anything of the plan of Miss Armitage and Beauchamp—the rescue plan?"

"I don't see how he could," said Briggs, firmly. "Walker told me that it was arranged that Beauchamp and I were not to talk about it."

"Why?"

"Because Beauchamp is afraid of getting into trouble, perhaps go to jail and have his business ruined. He was afraid that anything we might say might afterwards have to be told in court."

Livingston laughed, and then said:

"Walker, of course, thought you honest and me honest, and I warned him not to tell Beauchamp that I asked him to appoint you. But, look here, Briggs, if what you say is the case, Nesbitt couldn't know a thing."

"I don't see how he could," said Briggs, again.

"Then the quicker I get rid of him the better. If he was left in the plan he'd try to protect the girl, and,

as you may have guessed, Briggs, I'm going to have her in my power, as well as defeat her little game."

Briggs now asked some questions that Dick could not catch. He had talked in a lower voice than the other all along, as if mindful of the thin partitions.

"Certainly not," said Livingston, in reply. "I'll defeat it at the last moment, and carry her off. I have a vessel in the harbor below."

The conversation suddenly ceased. Livingston told Briggs to see him as soon as possible, and then took his departure.

Dick was fairly horrified by what he had heard.

Livingston was pretending to be assisting the lady with her "rescue plan," and was really plotting against her. Briggs was his tool. He had originally been appointed to the position Dick held, for an evil purpose—which poor Walker was ignorant of—and an attempt was to be made to put him there still. Above all, the lady was in danger. Livingston loved her, and wished to carry her off to make her his wife. She would, therefore, be put in further danger if Briggs supplanted Dick.

Dick sat down on the edge of his bed, and tried to think out the whole mystery. The more he studied it the more entangled he became.

He knelt down at his bedside and said a prayer, and before he slept he made a vow to exert all the energies of his body and mind in one direction. He would save the lady from the danger that threatened her, and of which she was unconscious; he would defeat the villainy of Livingston, and he would help on the "rescue plan," whatever that meant. She was in it. That was enough for him, though, if he did want more, his employer, Mr. Beauchamp, was in it, too, and heartily desired Dick to take his place.

Like most American youths, Dick was easily interested in anything that involved adventure and excitement, mystery and danger, and he was the very embodiment of old-time chivalry, courtesy and courage.

He dreamed of Miss Armitage.

CHAPTER VII

Dick's first thought next morning was that he should hurry to Mr. Beauchamp and tell him the whole situation, explain how he had accidentally taken another man's place, and relate all he had heard that went to show Livingston's villainy.

"Let me see," he soliloquized, as he dressed; "it was not my fault I got the position. It came fairly, and I have a right to hold it. Furthermore, I must hold it to serve the lady, and keep Briggs, who is helping that villain, Livingston. Would it be wise to tell Mr. Beauchamp all? He might kick me out and put Briggs in, and— By Jove! I'll hold my tongue. It will be best for Mr. Beauchamp himself, as well as for the lady."

He sat down at a little table, and, taking a blank sheet of paper and a pencil, wrote as follows:

"MR. BEAUCHAMP: Be warned against a red-haired young scoundrel named Briggs. He heard Mr. Walker describe the plan.
NESBITT."

He stole downstairs before Briggs was astir, muttering to himself: "What a chance it was that I should strike

the same boarding house as Briggs." In the hall he met the landlady, who said:

"A letter for you, Mr. Nesbitt. Just came by special messenger—one of Mr. Beauchamp's servants."

She handed him the letter, acting in a way that showed him he had suddenly risen in her estimation. It was not everyone that could have special correspondence with the great lumber king.

"Do you know, I've put you down as a detective, Mr. Nesbitt," she said, pleasantly, smiling all over her face. "You have that nice, sharp look, and then, your clothes—" She ended abruptly with a knowing wink, thinking, poor woman, she had paid him a flattering compliment.

"Well, I am not a detective, Mrs. Lowry," said Dick, somewhat crankily, for he resented both her curiosity and her words, and he held in contempt the business of detective above all others. "I'm going to breakfast," he added; "I'm in a hurry."

"Oh, certainly, sir. No offense, I hope?"

"Not at all, madam; only, please don't take me for a detective."

She was more than ever convinced he was a Pinkerton man. She was one of those who make heroes of detectives.

He saw a chance to find out something about the trial, but he had promised Mr. Beauchamp he would not talk of it, so he let Mrs. Lowry go without a conversation.

"I must see and warn the girl at once," he thought, as with eager curiosity he tore open his employer's letter.

"My Dear Nesbitt," it ran, "see the girl, Miss Armitage, at once. Tell her I'm sick—confined to my house—and that you're taking my place. You'll find her near the same spot. Do your best for her, lad, and—I beseech you—stand between me and—you understand. Poor Walker is dead—ah, yes. Tell her the shock has prostrated me, and that you will fill my place."

Poor man! He was afraid to sign his name to the letter, as he was afraid to go on with his share of the work.

Dick had just learned enough to shrewdly guess one fact: Mr. Beauchamp was pretending to be sick in order to escape the dangers and risks involved in his personally taking part in the great task, whatever it was. Having got Dick as a substitute and shouldered the burden on him, he was going to confine himself to the house for a few days—or till all danger was over.

When Dick got outside he dispatched the note concerning Briggs to Mr. Beauchamp. Then he set off down the river.

"Mr. Beauchamp is terribly afraid of being compromised," he thought. "He beseeches me to save him. Surely, then, the plot or plan must be a dangerous one. Wonder what it can be?"

He walked around the back of the village in order to come out behind the big building that he had taken to be a jail. He sauntered along slowly and carelessly, so that anyone seeing him might not attach any importance to his movements.

In a little while he reached the southeast corner of the wall where Mr. Beauchamp had sent him on his first strange errand. He saw no one about. He was too close to the wall now to take note of the massive stone.

building inside, but he had already remarked that one angle of the jail was, at this point, but a few feet away from the wall. His main object in coming this way had been to avoid Mr. Beauchamp's office, so that the clerks might not see him.

He was about to pass on along the hill, when a notion struck him to look about in the grass where he had found the strange articles he had carried to his employer.

He walked the whole length of the eastern wall and saw nothing. There was not an article of any kind lying in the grass.

This brought him to the edge of the hill, where he could be seen from the office. He resolved to walk back to the southeast corner, and from there proceed by a detour along the semicircular hill to the bit of projecting land near which he had met the lady.

Just as he was turning he heard a slight noise—a sort of clicking sound, but he saw nothing. He walked on, keeping close to the wall. When he had almost reached the corner he was surprised to see an object lying in the grass. It had fallen there since he had arrived, which accounted, no doubt, for the clicking sound he had heard.

It was another salmon can!

He hastily picked it up, and out of it rolled a broken eggshell. Discarding the can, he concealed the eggshell in his hand and started off along the hill. Presently he had gained the shelter of a clump of trees; he stopped and looked back. There was no sign of life about the prison.

He set to work to examine the eggshell, half expecting it would clear up the mystery. He looked first on the inside; there was nothing there. On the outside there was some faint writing in lead pencil.

"Ha!" he muttered, excitedly, and his eyes eagerly strained themselves to make out the message. After some difficulty he read the following words:

"For God's sake, don't fail me! It is so hard to die—and innocent. They have changed the hour for to-night. No hope after that. Oh, please show this to her. To-night! To-night! Save me! Save me! C."

To say that Dick was excited after reading this strange message, put in his hands by accident, would be a weak way of describing his feelings. He could scarcely control himself. All the chivalry of his nature was aroused by that pathetic appeal: "For God's sake, don't fail me!" while the words: "It is so hard to die—and innocent—save me!" brought the tears rolling down his cheeks. He had a faint idea of the great plot now, and he was in it, heart and soul. Yes, he was ready to risk his life.

There was a condemned prisoner in yonder jail, and Dick would have staked all he possessed on his innocence. That prisoner was to be rescued.

"Good heavens!" he cried. "What may it not mean by 'they have changed the hour for to-night'? Perhaps the making of the plan an impossibility. I must see her at once."

He never doubted for a moment that "her" meant the lady he had seen.

With a prayer on his lips he bounded off along the hill. By and by he came to the place where the wooded piece of land jutted out into the water. He passed along the edge of the wood, going in the direction he had seen the girl go the night before. He did not see two men who were hidden but a short depth in the woods as he passed.

They had seen him coming and concealed themselves. They had just been on the point of going to the village for no other purpose than to find him.

"Ha, Growler," said one of them, as our hero's footsteps died away, "we have just been saved a big trouble."

"You bet," grunted his companion. "The boss can't threaten us now. Hadn't we better follow?"

"Not both of us. You stay here. Come when I whistle."

Dick reached the eastern end of the base of the projecting land, and stood on the bank of the river, looking around. A rowboat was drawn up near his feet. There were no houses near the shore for quite a distance, and a long ridge of hills shut out a view of the country to the south. There were patches of woods, too, on all sides; the piece of forest on the projecting land being of primeval thickness. It was a beautiful scene that lay before him. Vieing with the magnificent foliage that lined the bank, and the profusion of rich vegetation everywhere about, was the broad St. Lawrence River—miles in width here—that flowed lazily along, reflecting on its polished bosom the glories of the azure firmament, where little fleecy, wind-blown clouds seemed to take pride in their reflected counterparts beneath.

But it was not these beauties that caught the eye of Dick, and held his attention, so that he stood for a moment like a statue about to come into life. Away out on the water near the point of the cape was anchored a small vessel, while, drawn up to the wooded cape itself, was a little pleasure yacht that looked like a graceful bird momentarily at rest. The two were about five hundred yards apart, the yacht being nearest to Dick.

"I wonder if she could possibly be on one of those vessels?" thought Dick. "I must find her somehow."

He heard a footstep behind him.

He turned quickly, and saw a thick-set, heavily bearded man, with a short, black pipe in his mouth, coming down the bank toward him. It was one of the sailors he had seen with Livingston the night before.

Somehow, Dick did not care to question this individual; but, at all events, he was spared the trouble, for, taking the pipe slowly from his mouth, the man said:

"The lady wants to see you, sir. I was just going to the village for you."

"Where is she?" asked Dick, anxiously.

"See that yacht yonder, near the shore?" inquired the sailor, pointing with his pipe. "Not the big vessel, but the yacht. She's aboard there. You're to take this rowboat and row out, quick."

"All right," said Dick, and the next moment he was in the boat, and pulling toward the point of the cape.

The sailor watched him but a second or two, and then turned and strolled lazily up the bank. When he had passed over the top of it and out of the rower's sight, he broke into a fast run, which soon brought him to the side of his companion, who had been waiting for him.

"We've got him, Growler," he whispered. "He's making for the yacht. He thinks she's aboard it. Gee whizz! this is luck!"

"Then we'd better run through the bush, and get there first, hadn't we, Hank?"

"Yes. Come on. Won't Livingston be surprised?"

Through the woods they ran, at a rate that was certain to bring them to the point of the cape before the

rower could arrive there. They chuckled as they ran. By a singular stroke of luck they had accomplished that which they had expected would necessitate a trip to the village, with all its attendant risks, and all kinds of maneuvering after getting there. The best part of it was, their master, Livingston, would be put in great good humor by their speedy and successful return. He was now impatiently awaiting the result of their mission.

CHAPTER VIII.

All unconscious of the trap set for him, Dick rowed on. He had no thought of danger. He looked over his shoulder now and then, and each time saw the handsome little yacht rocking gently with the waves that lapped the shore of the cape. It was tied to two trees near the water's edge. He could see no sign of life on board, and came to the conclusion that the lady and her elderly companion were resting in the cabin. Some one aboard would see him, he thought, when he got a little closer. He ceased to look around for a while and rowed hard, keeping his eyes on an object ashore and steering by it.

He was right in one conjecture, namely, that some one would soon be watching him from the cabin of the yacht. While his back was turned two figures came out of the shadow of the bush, stole hurriedly down the bank, and leaped aboard the yacht. Next moment they had gained the shelter of the cabin, the skylight of which was raised three feet above the deck.

"Mr. Livingston!" called one of them, softly.

"What's the matter, Growler?" said that gentleman, looking up from some peculiar work he was engaged in.

"Look out there to leeward," came the reply.

Livingston rose, put his face to the window, and uttered a triumphant cry, terminating in an oath.

"We've got him, Growler," he added. "I have my work here finished just in time." He touched with his foot a little coil of rope that had heavy weights attached to it.

"He's coming right here, sir. Thinks the girl is here."

"Whew! Great Scott! Well, he'll get a fine reception," said Livingston, his jaws snapping together. "Come, now, get ready. Hello! what's he stopping for?"

Dick had brought his boat within a hundred yards of the yacht. He laid down the oars a moment, and, letting the boat drift along, turned round in his seat to see if anyone had noticed his approach. His eye fell and rested on the larger vessel, on the deck of which he could see a couple of figures moving. One of them was a woman, as he could tell by the fact of her holding a parasol over her head. This circumstance was sufficient to make him look again and to set him thinking. Could it be that he had been misdirected? He looked again at the yacht, and a strange thing happened. The shadows of three figures moved inside the cabin window. He could see this plainly on account of the glass windows of the opposite side of the cabin, which formed a light background. But what made him notice the circumstance with a touch of interest was the fact that one of the figures had a pipe in his mouth. Dick picked up the oars and gave the boat a turn so as to bring its prow more directly toward the yacht and his face toward the larger vessel. He took a couple of short strokes, looked over his shoulder quickly and saw that the three shadows had disappeared from the

cabin window. The same moment he saw two ladies come to the rail of the larger vessel, and look across at him. One of them held a marine glass to her eyes. Presently she lowered it, and waved her handkerchief.

"It is she," cried Dick, and immediately he turned his boat around and rowed toward her. This brought his face toward the yacht, and now he saw how near he had come to falling into a trap.

Out of the cabin of the yacht came Livingston.

"Hi, there, Nesbitt," he shouted. "Come back. I want to see you. Very important matter."

Ay, it was important; as important as Dick's own life and the life of a scoundrel who was fighting even more than a claim the gallows had upon him. He had not tied the weights to the rope for nothing.

Dick pretended not to hear. He rowed as fast as he could draw the blades. What was his surprise, presently, to see Livingston step out of the yacht into a little rowboat, pick up the oars and proceed to follow him. He felt certain he was going to learn something about the mystery now. He heard a voice behind him. It was the lady on the deck of the large vessel, for he had now got close to it.

"Mr. Nesbitt," she cried, "come faster."

Dick smiled, for Livingston, whose appearance must have caused her words, was far behind. He was rowing like mad.

A few quick strokes brought Dick within reach of the rope that was cordially thrown to him, and, accepting an offer from one of the sailors to look after the boat, he mounted to the deck.

The young lady came running forward, and caught his hands.

"Oh, I am so glad to see you, Mr. Nesbitt," she cried. "I have so much to say to you. Capt. Daniels"—she turned to an elderly man in a captain's uniform—"please contrive to prevent Mr. Livingston from coming aboard. Come with me, Mr. Nesbitt."

Dick followed her to a cabin on the upper deck, where she introduced him to the other lady he had seen the night before—Mrs. Daniels, the captain's wife.

"Oh, Mr. Nesbitt," said the young lady, "I've been longing to see you since last evening, when you so nobly promised to give me your aid in this dear, dangerous work."

"Madam," said Dick, rising and leading her to an easy-chair, as she seemed weak from emotion, "I want to explain to you how things stand. Let me first say I am your devoted servant, ready to risk my life in your enterprise." Here she seized and shook his hand, while tears of gratitude welled up in her eyes. "Mr. Beauchamp is too sick to help you. He has put me in his place. But what the plot is I do not know, nor do I know your name. Is it Armitage?"

"What!" exclaimed the lady, "you know nothing about my brother, Charlie?"

"I know nothing," said Dick.

"I am Miss Armitage," she said, and then she stopped short with a look of wonder in her face. "Strange," she muttered, presently.

"Madam," said Dick, "we waste time. You must trust me. I've come to tell you that Livingston is a villain. He is trying——"

"Ah, don't mind him," she interrupted. "I am avoiding him all I can. But what can I do with a man who is

generously offering to assist me to rescue my brother? He has come here at his own expense, because I declined his aid, and——"

"For his own evil ends," thought Dick.

The cabin door suddenly opened.

"Mr. Livingston begs to see you," said Capt. Daniels, appearing.

"Then let him come," said the lady, with an impatient shrug of her shoulders.

"Stop," cried Dick, leaping to his feet. "Not now. That man is plotting against you. He——"

"Oh, surely not, Mr. Nesbitt!" said the lady, incredulously.

"I have proof of it, madam," said Dick. "But, look here; I have brought you something I found near the prison," and he drew out the eggshell.

"Oh, a message from Charlie!" she cried, and she took it from his hands, and began eagerly to read the writing on it.

"Don't let that man in, captain," said Dick, involuntarily assuming the command. "I give you my word he's a scoundrel. It is absolutely necessary he should not know this message."

A cry from the young lady startled Dick, the captain and his wife. She let the eggshell fall to the carpet, and it broke. Dick hurried to her side and was in time to catch her as she fell to a sofa. She had fainted. The message had overcome her.

"What does it say?" asked the captain.

Dick told him.

"Good God, to-day!" cried the captain. "Why, there is not a moment to lose!"

They busied themselves with Miss Armitage.

The moment she revived, she cried out:

"Oh, Capt. Daniels—Mrs. Daniels! It is to-day! Charlie's message says they have changed the date for the banquet of the jail guards for to-night. What will we do? He says there is no hope after that. Oh, we must save him!"

Capt. Daniels was deathly pale.

"Then we must carry it out to-night, Miss Armitage," he cried. "By heavens, we must carry it out to-night," and he smote his thigh with his ponderous fist.

"But there is no time. We are not ready," moaned the girl.

"We will be ready! We must rescue Charlie to-night," cried the captain.

These were the first intelligible words Dick had heard. The enthusiasm of the moment and the sight of the young lady's tear-stained face caught him as if by an iron clasp.

"Yes, we will rescue Charlie to-night," he shouted, and he sprang across the floor and seized the captain's hand and shook it hard.

"God bless you, young man," muttered the captain, as he looked into Dick's honest face. "I am more hopeful for this desperate undertaking since we've gained such an ally as you."

"Oh, then can it be done to-night?" asked Miss Armitage. "Can our plan really be set in motion to-night?"

"It must," said Capt. Daniels, firmly.

"Yes, it must," echoed Dick, knowing not how gigantic and daring the plan was and what frightful dangers it involved.

"Yes, I would do it to-night," said a soft voice near the door.

They turned, and saw the tall form of Arthur Livingston!

In his stylish black dress, with his long, calm, clean-shaven face, he looked like a clergyman about to pronounce a benediction.

"We must rescue poor Charlie to-night," he said, quietly, and with well-affected sympathy.

"Good heavens!" gasped Dick, the whole horror of the situation appearing to him. He knew, what the others evidently did not, that Livingston was trying to defeat the plan, while appearing to be a friend zealously forwarding it. From the words he had spoken to Briggs it was plainly Livingston's intention to checkmate the plan by informing the authorities at the last moment. He was also going to steal away the young lady, if possible.

"Miss Armitage," said the polished scoundrel, "I again offer you my help to rescue poor Charlie. I am glad you are going to put the plan in operation to-night. Excuse me for obtruding upon you. Believe me, I am actuated only by friendship. I see you are not well. I will go back to my yacht now, and if, before night, when the undertakings begins—he laid a peculiar stress on these words—"you should see fit to accept my proffered assistance, you can send a messenger over. Good-morning."

He made a deep bow, and the next moment his tall form had disappeared through the doorway of the cabin.

"See there, he's friendly enough," said Miss Armitage.

"Look here, madam," cried Dick. "He's a villain. He's going to warn the authorities. I heard him say so. He has some reason for wishing to defeat your plan."

"What?" exclaimed Capt. Daniels and Miss Armitage, in a breath. "Warn the authorities? Then we are lost!"

They were astounded at the news.

"Yes," added the captain, "we are lost! To-night is our only chance to rescue Charlie from the jail. He is to be hung in a few days. Livingston will balk the plan."

"Never!" cried Dick. "I will save you. Change the date for two hours, and in the afternoon change it back again."

"We'll make it for to-morrow, then," said the captain, catching the young man's meaning.

"Then, Miss Armitage, will you allow me to row over to the yacht as your messenger, and tell Livingston the date has been changed? I will go aboard and talk to him."

"I will," said the girl, and she shook his hand.

The captain slyly slipped a revolver into Dick's hand as the two crossed the deck.

Just as Livingston reached his yacht again, Dick set out. In a few minutes, having rowed across alone from the big vessel, he stepped out of the rowboat and onto the deck of the yacht.

Livingston and his two sailors had been watching him from the cabin window.

"Hush, Growler! We've got him now!" whispered Livingston. "It's a convenient place to try these weights."

The cabin door opened, and Dick Nesbitt, smiling and fearless, stepped into their midst. He was taking this risk to serve the lady.

Would he be let out alive?

CHAPTER IX.

Dick knew just how great the danger was, but he was resolved to face it for the girl's sake. Livingston would baffle her plan by warning the authorities if something were not done to check him. Dick also knew that Livingston's intention was, for some strange reason, to leave the warning till the last moment.

"Good-day," he said, smilingly, as he stepped in through the cabin door. "Miss Armitage sent me to Mr. Livingston with a message."

He noted the look of surprise in the faces of the three men, as well as their looks of joy and amusement. Livingston was lying back in an easy-chair, smoking a cigar. His two henchmen, one on each side of him, were looking at his face to catch, as it were, a cue as to whether they should laugh outright or not.

"Indeed!" said Livingston. "What's the message?"

"She has changed her mind. To-morrow night has been set for the carrying out of the plan," said Dick, calmly.

"Oh, indeed!"

The tone in which these words were uttered, as well as the cynical twinkle in Livingston's eye, indicated that the moment of danger was at hand.

The long-limbed man in the chair was saying to himself: "Whatever must be done with this fellow must be done now."

"Tell me," he said, "what have you got to do with this business? How did you come to be in it?"

"Look here," said Dick, leaning his left arm against the doorway, and keeping his right hand on the revolver in his pocket, "let us understand each other, Mr. Livingston. You have just asked me a question. I answer: None of your business, and proceed to inform you I know you have made up your mind that I shall never leave this yacht alive. Very well. Before leaving Capt. Daniels' vessel I took the precaution to prepare for you. If I don't return there in fifteen minutes they are to assume I have been murdered on this yacht and are to act accordingly. Now, go ahead; or would you rather I'd proceed?"

"Proceed, by all means," said Livingston, smiling, though his face had been deadly white for a moment. "Your story is very interesting."

"Very well," said Dick, returning the smile. "I am glad you like it. I just want to add that, besides defying you in the matter of hindering me going off this yacht, I also defy you to go one step further in opposition to Miss Armitage. If you do, I'll crush you."

Livingston jumped to his feet. His face was very pale. Surprise and rage were pictured on it.

"What do you mean by opposition to Miss Armitage?" he cried.

"I know you," said Dick. "I know more about you than you think. Above all, I know why you're trying to spoil this plan."

Livingston made as if to spring at Dick's throat, but he had got too great a fright. He sat down with his face as pale as death. Dick's shot had told. When he had spoken of knowing Livingston's object he referred to what he had overheard in Briggs' room. The frightened Livingston thought he meant something more serious.

So it happened that Dick stepped off the yacht safe,

though even to the last moment Livingston was tempted to strike him down.

"Look here, Nesbitt," he said, standing on the deck, as Dick took his seat in the rowboat. "Are you going to do any talking about me around here?"

"No," said Dick; "not till I see you make a move; but then—well, look out. I know you'll kill me when you find a safer chance than to-day. But, in the meantime, don't interfere with Miss Armitage. I carry back an offer of your help, I suppose? And you'll visit her vessel shortly?"

"Yes," said Livingston.

That ended the scene.

Dick rowed off, laughing to himself, and Livingston retired to his cabin, cursing and growling.

Dick reached the propeller *Janet*, and was shortly on deck, talking to Capt. Daniels and Miss Armitage. He did not relate the full scene with Livingston, but merely the pith of it. He told them Livingston was coming, and advised Capt. Daniels to make him a prisoner.

"I'm sure he's deceived as to the time," said he; "but he will certainly watch us. Hadn't you better change the time for your plan, Miss Armitage?" he asked, smiling. "We have avoided telling a lie."

"Yes, it will be to-night," she answered. "Capt. Daniels and I have been talking during your absence."

"Yes, and we've agreed," said the captain, "to start immediately. You, Mr. Nesbitt, must go ashore at once, so as not to excite suspicion—here's Livingston coming already. As soon as he's gone I'm going to take the vessel away down the river till about two hours before dark. You will stay near the village and furtively watch the jail for any signal that may possibly be made from it. At six o'clock you will come to yonder tree which you see ashore there—"

"Yes, I understand," said Dick.

"Oh, be sure and don't fail in that, Mr. Nesbitt," put in Miss Armitage.

"I'll be at yonder tree at six o'clock," said Dick, "and I understand that I'll meet a man of yours there?"

"Yes, our man Gillans, a faithful fellow, will meet you at six exactly," said Capt. Daniels, "and he'll hear from you if all's right at the village and if any signal has come from the jail. He will then signal us, and the start will be made—about half-past eight, if possible."

"I understand," said Dick. "Wouldn't it be well to explain the whole plan to me now?"

"Yes, yes," said Miss Armitage.

"No, Nesbitt; there's no time for that now," said the captain. "Livingston's almost here. See. You get ashore. But Gillans, who will meet you yonder at six o'clock, can explain what is necessary."

"Very well. Couldn't I have a look at this man, Gillans, so that I'll know him and make no mistake?" said Dick.

"Yes; come, quick."

While Livingston's boat was yet fifty yards off, Capt. Daniels took Dick below. The latter got an overwhelming surprise. In the space between decks he saw over a dozen athletic-looking men, dressed in all kinds of the oddest suits he ever saw, from the tights and trunks of acrobats to the frock coat, white vest and silk hat of a society gentleman. He also saw two jackasses and a

little cart, and a huge umbrella and other things he could not name.

"Great Caesar!" he exclaimed, in amazement.

"Hush," said Capt. Daniels. "Nothing of this now. Here, Gillans, you."

A big, round-faced, jolly-looking man came forward, and, doffing his cap in a comical manner, shook Dick's hand, saying, "I'm Gillans. You'll know me."

Dick followed Capt. Daniels back on deck, laughing and wondering. There he saw Livingston talking to Miss Armitage and Mrs. Daniels. The latter two did not know Livingston's perfidy as Dick knew it, and were consequently treating him civilly, though coldly. They believed Dick must be mistaken, at least to some extent, in his views. Livingston belonged to a respectable New York family.

"I'd capture him and hold him till to-night, captain," whispered Dick as he went over the vessel's side.

"You mistrust him too much, Nesbitt," laughed Capt. Daniels, "but still, I'll watch him."

"I really want to help you, Miss Armitage," were the last words Dick's ears caught as he left the vessel, and he rowed away, leaving Livingston aboard and glancing after him, while still keeping up his talk with the captain and the ladies.

Dick got ashore, hurried to the village and went to his employer's house. He was obliged to give the letter to a servant to take to Mr. Beauchamp, as the latter was said to be too sick to see anyone. Dick felt annoyed. It was evident that Mr. Beauchamp, through fear of exposure, had decided to wash his hands of the whole affair.

Up to four o'clock our hero watched the jail from the cover of the little bit of bush on the hill. He saw nothing worthy of notice.

But a little later he saw a low-set, stout figure hurrying along the river bank away from the village and toward the wooded cape.

It was Briggs. He was no doubt going to the yacht to see his master.

"Let him go," thought Dick; "but I'm blamed if I'll let him come back. He's a factor in the game that Miss Armitage and Capt. Daniels are not aware of, and it's my duty to take care of him. He could bring danger to all of us."

So saying, Dick took a last look toward the jail—wondering what signal could have been expected—and then left his hiding place and descended the hill. He made his way quickly to the river bank.

"I believe I'll follow Briggs up," he muttered. "Under no circumstances must I let him get back to the village."

So he walked on, taking care that Briggs should not be able to pass him, if he returned, by making a detour. He reached the place where the land began to jut out into the river, passed the end of the bush, and, from the shore of the little bay on the other side, looked out toward the point of the cape near which the yacht had been moored. It was still there, and there were figures on the deck; but the big vessel was no longer in sight. It was gone, Capt. Daniels having taken it down the river. Dick retraced his steps for fifty yards or so and then dived into the bush. He was now on the jutting piece of land, or cape, and was making his way toward the point of it, taking care that no one should get past him on either side.

He stole from tree to tree. He went almost noiselessly,

keeping in the darkest shades of the bush, and yet as near the centre as possible. He kept ever listening for sounds, and at last, when he had almost finished the distance, the voices of men talking fell on his ears.

He stole along again, stopping only when the voices momentarily ceased, and in a few moments arrived at a place where he was not only in sight of the water, but was even within a few yards of the yacht. He lay down on his breast and crawled under some thick bushes on the top of the bank. From here he could see the men on the yacht and catch much of what was said by them.

Briggs was relating to Livingston the ineffectual efforts he had made to get an interview with Mr. Beauchamp, and Hank and the Growler were listening.

The yacht, gently rocking on the swell of the waves, the broad sweep of water streaked by the rays of the western sun, the gossamer haze hanging around the sky and waiting to drop on the river, the magnificent foliage along the shore duplicating itself by reflection in the water—these, with the intense silence of the evening, only served to make Dick feel more surely, as he watched the rough but picturesque figures on the yacht, that he had his finger on the pulse of a grim and bloody tragedy.

He listened.

CHAPTER X.

"Did you mention a word of the matter to anyone, Briggs?" asked Livingston, seating himself on a chair on the deck and lighting a cigar.

"No," said Briggs.

"Good!" declared Livingston.

"Good!" echoed Dick mentally. This suited him excellently.

"Because," said Livingston, "it will spoil all if it comes too soon. Half-past eight is the hour. I have myself to consider."

Here followed some words that Dick could not hear. He dared not go any closer. He was dangerously close now. He drew a bough down in front of his face and watched and listened again.

Presently Briggs and the man named Hank went into the cabin, leaving the other two on deck. They had been told to do this.

"Growler," said Livingston, slowly, "you have a right to know my plans. I don't try to jolly you as I do Briggs."

"As much as anyone, guv'nor, but I'm not standin' on rights. Go on—why don't you send Briggs now?"

"I daren't let Charlie Armitage out of that prison. It would mean I go in, so I have to balk her plan."

"Well, send the warning to the authorities quick."

"No, that won't do, either—must wait till their plan is started."

"Why?"

"For two reasons. First, I want it to be known there was a real attempt, as it will make sure of Charlie Armitage's being hung and thus closing the case forever, and secondly, it will enable me to steal his sister. Now you have it, Growler."

"Oh, I see. You mean——"

"That the plot will be set on foot—the authorities will hear of it and jump—the plotters will run helter-skelter in fear, Miss Armitage among them. I step out at the

proper moment to help her, and lo! presto! she's on my yacht and in my power. That's why I chip in and help the plotters. Charlie Armitage, too, will be more closely guarded for the rest of the time and will more surely hang, thus saving me. D'y'e see?"

Dick caught every word of it, and, horrified as he was, he chuckled. It was not hard to defeat this, he thought. It needed only one thing, namely, to prevent the warning going to the authorities. That was the whole danger. The rest he laughed at, now that he was forewarned.

Livingston called to Briggs and the latter came from the cabin.

"Briggs," said the strong bass voice, "here's the letter. You'll go to the village at once and hang around till dark, keeping your eye on any of the authorities. About eight o'clock post yourself near the north wall of the jail and wait till you see the attempt started. Then act. Go."

"Yes, sir."

Dick did not wait to hear more. He took advantage of the continuance of the talk to steal cautiously from his hiding place and make his way back through the woods. He concealed himself near a spot that it seemed Briggs must pass on his return. He looked at his watch. It was a quarter past five. He would have time to attend to Briggs before meeting Gillans. He took the cartridges from his revolver, lest any accident should happen. He was not one of those young men that are fond of fire-arms. He regarded it a cowardly thing and beneath the dignity of a gentleman to carry them, except in extreme cases of danger.

He then took off his coat and laid it against the trunk of the tree, because he anticipated no easy time in his coming "argument," as he mentally termed it. Briggs had the look of a "natural-born" pugilist. He was not very tall, but he was stout, strong and chock-full of most of the instincts and attributes of a bulldog.

"But I'll whip him if he shows fight," muttered Dick, clinching his fists.

The watch showed half-past five. Dick was getting anxious. There was no sign of Briggs coming, and it was absolutely necessary to attend to him before meeting Gillans. In fact, it was necessary to silence Briggs or prevent him, in some way, from warning the authorities without Livingston's being the wiser of it. It was worth Dick's while to do this, even if he took no further part in the plot, particularly as Miss Armitage and her helpers knew nothing of Briggs' hostility any more than they knew of his existence.

But Briggs was not coming. Dick looked out and listened and measured with his eye the width of the wood, or, in other words, the base of the cape, and assured himself a dozen times that the florid gentleman could not have passed unseen.

Another quarter of an hour went by.

"I wonder what's the matter?" muttered Dick, and then he let his eye fall on the hill to the south, and ran it along the ridge as far as he could see, which was away up near the prison.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, as he sighted a figure climbing the hill fully half a mile off. "That's Briggs, I'm almost certain. How did he get past?"

The truth flashed on him. One of Livingston's men had rowed Briggs around the point of the cape and up the

river to a place near where Dick had met Briggs the night before.

Yes, a slight change of position on Dick's part—he moved up about twenty yards—and there was the sight of the boat returning, and just disappearing round the cape point.

Why has this been done? Perhaps just to please Briggs and impress him with the sense of his own importance as an ally. Livingston had talked of "jollying" him. Was there a reason for that?

Yes, a great reason, if Dick had known it. Briggs was a more important figure in the drama than he imagined.

Dick took in the situation with dismay. Here was a real danger. Briggs had escaped him and had now reached the top of the hill and was hurrying toward the jail.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Dick, "what is he going to do now? Have they changed the plan? Is he going to warn the authorities at once?"

He watched the retreating figure with feelings almost of horror.

Briggs, for the present, was more of a menace to the rescue plan than Livingston himself.

What was to be done? It was impossible to catch him now. Besides, it was almost six o'clock, and there was Gillans to meet.

Thinking of the poor lady and the desperate prisoner who protested his innocence, Dick turned his eyes away from the hill, and, with a feeling akin to heart-sickness, ran almost at full speed down the river bank. It was absolutely necessary to keep the tryst with Gillans. He found this jolly looking individual already waiting for him and calmly smoking his pipe, as if there was no great plot on hand.

"Hello, me boy," said Gillans in a deep Irish brogue. "How are things beyant? Sit down here and tell me. We'll have an hour or more to chat."

"I can't wait even to hear what the plot is about," said Dick. "Something terrible has happened. I must hurry back to the village. We're lost unless I can capture a man and get him out of the way."

"Oh, wirra! What's this?" said Gillans in comic fright.

Dick quickly told him the news about Briggs.

"Bedad, you're right," said Gillans, seriously. "I had thought you and me'd wait here till the cavalcade came up, but——"

"I must get after Briggs."

"You must, me boy, and douse him, too, or poor Charlie's lost—ah, his poor sister, God bless her! Run, Nesbitt, run, and—look here! This will change our plans. Don't you come back. If you succeed in makin' Briggs safe, you can meet us about an hour afther dark near the jail."

"How do you intend to work the escape?" asked Dick. "But no, I haven't time," he added immediately, glancing villageward.

"No, me boy. Get Briggs first. Run, quick."

Off went Dick like an arrow. He was now so heartily interested in Miss Armitage's great undertaking that she herself could hardly have been more willing to make sacrifices or efforts. He left the river bank presently and followed the path up the hill, as he had seen Briggs do. While he was running his eyes fell on the prison and in

some way got attracted to one particular window near the southeast corner.

He stopped short. He was on the crest of a hill and would lose sight of the window if he went any farther. Even while he was stopping he saw a white object like a broad sheet of paper pass across the window on the inside and a moment later it passed again.

There was a pause of about thirty seconds, during which time he saw nothing at the window. Then the same object reappeared and passed across the window seven times in rapid succession.

"Twenty-seven," said a voice a few yards away, and Dick almost stumbled with the quick start he gave. He looked around and to his surprise saw a man rising from behind some bushes where he had lain concealed. The latter was holding a handkerchief above his head and looking steadily toward the prison. He had been so intent on his work that he did not see Dick or hear him. He now saw him and gave a quick start of fright, lowered the handkerchief and stepped behind the bushes, still watching Dick. But presently he emerged again with a look of relief on his face, and immediately Dick saw the cause.

It was one of the men he had seen on Capt. Daniels' vessel, who had also seen him when he went below to look at Gillans.

"Hush!" said Dick. "Don't be afraid. I'm with you."

"Thank God!" muttered the man, and then both instinctively looked toward the prison.

There was nothing to be seen there now. The object had disappeared from the window; yet Dick imagined—was it only fancy?—he could see a pale face looking out.

"I must go," muttered the man, excitedly. "Twenty-seven! Help her, boy," and, turning round quickly, he darted off in the direction Dick had just come.

"He's very excited," thought Dick. "That must have been the signal they were expecting," and he took one glance at the fast retreating figure.

Suddenly recollecting himself, he started down the hill, but not toward the prison. There was danger of attracting notice. He contented himself with advancing toward the village at a fast walk.

An hour and a half's search failed to find Briggs. Dick was nearly wild with excitement. The hour for the great plan—the hour to strike—was at hand, and still Briggs was at large, liable at any moment to explode a bomb by warning the authorities.

Oh, if he (Dick) could only find him in some out-of-the-way place—if he could only secure him, even at the last moment, so that he might be in time to prevent him foiling the desperate attempt about to be made.

Suddenly Dick heard a loud beating of drums outside the village, and a moment later the sound of Scotch bagpipes and fifes. The villagers were flocking out onto the streets; the whole place was being aroused; there was a crowd gathering to see what was the matter. Dick stopped short in the very center of the town and looked across the street.

There was Briggs in the midst of a crowd, walking along with them.

A desperate resolution seized Dick. Crowd or no crowd, he must capture Briggs and that at once. He must not let five minutes pass. The noise undoubtedly meant something, and Briggs was going to act.

Across the street Dick bounded with the spring of a panther, elbowed his way through the crowd and brought his two hands down on the shoulders of the astonished Briggs.

CHAPTER XI.

Briggs let a roar escape him that drew the attention of fifty people on them, but that did not disconcert Dick. Catching his man by the collar he whispered:

"Say, have you seen Livingston? Do you know the police are going to take him?"

"No," stammered Briggs, surprised and frightened by the suddenness of it all.

"Then come quick with me," said Dick in a whisper, at the same time making facial signs that there was danger from the crowd. "If your name is Briggs you'd better look out."

"What's the matter?" gasped Briggs.

"Come with me quick or you'll get into trouble. Livingston's liable to be arrested."

"Go away!" muttered the astonished Briggs, and immediately he began to accompany Dick, whose first object was to get him out of the crowd.

It was cleverly done. Dick's manner and his words about Livingston, which were true enough, completely deceived Briggs. Not a question did he ask till Dick had led him back of the village and out of sight of the crowd.

All this time the noise of the drums and fifes was going on, and, added to it now, there was shouting; but Dick did not mind that. His first object was to disarm Briggs.

"Look here, Briggs," he whispered, glancing around to see that they were quite alone, "there's danger. Livingston's going to be caught. You better run to him quickly and warn him to get away while there is yet time. There's a man here that knows all about him. Quick. Give me that letter to the authorities. I'll attend to it. You warn Livingston, poor fellow."

Briggs was about to take the letter out of his pocket when he suddenly stopped, shoved it back again and firmly said:

"I won't."

He was naturally suspicious.

In a trice Dick had thrown off his coat. There was no time for words now. He must win his point by action, and without a word of warning he let his right fist fly and Briggs went over on his back. Dick waited for him to get up. They closed in fistic combat, and at the end of about three minutes Briggs rose from his knees and surrendered the letter on Dick's threatening to prolong the thrashing.

"You'll believe me now?" said Dick. "Go and warn Livingston."

Off went Briggs in the direction of the cape and the yacht. Dick watched him till he was out of sight and then stowed the letter away carefully in his pocket.

"This will do to open the eyes of Miss Armitage," he muttered. "It will reveal her friend, Livingston, in his true colors."

The great noise was still going on. It now came from the vicinity of the ground that lay between the village and Mr. Beauchamp's office.

Dick hurried thither and saw a sight that amazed and bewildered him.

A crowd of fully five hundred of the villagers was gathered there in a large circle, in the midst of which was a wide ring inclosed by a single rope fastened to stakes. Inside this ring were a dozen or more men performing. Two, dressed in Turkish costume, beat large drums, apparently with less intention to make music than to make an uproar of noise. Two more, attired as Highlanders, played on the bagpipes, while two dressed as swells played on flutes. There were three acrobatic performers, dressed in tights, who alternated with tumbling and feats on a horizontal bar. A man dressed as a clown cut up funny antics with two trained jackasses. Another performed with a ladder, while the last one, attired in Japanese costume, juggled with knives and balls. The funniest part of it was that nearly all the performers, while still keeping their feats going, sang loudly to the accompaniment of the ill-assorted and discordant instruments, while the ring master, in magnificent attire, continually shouted his orders and reproaches to the clown.

It was a curious sight. Dick laughed when he first saw it, and then, drawing closer, held his breath and emitted a long, low whistle.

"By jove," he muttered, "I see it."

It all came to him like a flash. These were the strange people he had seen on Capt. Daniels' vessel. They were performing here, between the village and the jail, and making all this unearthly noise for a purpose.

That purpose was twofold. It was to hold the attention of the villagers and keep it off the jail. It was also to prevent noises at the jail being heard.

Dick slipped out of the crowd and stole away in the darkness. A few moments later he had ascended the hill and reached the northeast corner of the prison wall.

He saw three figures at the other end of it. He made toward them. They saw him and were evidently alarmed. Two of them quickly disappeared round the corner and the other came toward him.

At the distance of six paces Dick's sharp eyes recognized Gillans.

"That you, Nesbitt? Good," whispered the latter.

"Is everything well?" asked Dick, beneath his breath.

"So far, but it's dangerous. Come," was the response.

They stole to the corner and Gillans rounded it first. In another moment Dick was with the group, which consisted of Miss Armitage, Capt. Daniels, Gillans, two sailors of the *Janet* and one other man.

The last-mentioned person caught Dick's eye from the first. He was a tall man with a full, black beard. He wore a tall silk hat and a black cape overcoat that came down to his heels. With his cane, his gloves, his dress and manners, he looked a most stylish person.

"What's the plan?" asked Dick, anxiously.

"The plan," whispered Capt. Daniels, "is that Miss Armitage will go around to the warden's office and ask permission to see her brother in his cell. The warden gives a supper to-night at nine o'clock to the turnkeys, but, for all that, he won't refuse the request, because Charlie is to be hung the day after to-morrow. Mr. Selwyn here"—motioning to the stylishly dressed stranger—"is to accompany Miss Armitage into the cell. He will quickly change clothes with Charlie and will remain in the cell when Charlie and his sister come out. The rest of us will then be on hand to help."

"But," asked Dick, "how will Mr. Selwyn get out?"

There was a deep pause for a moment. Miss Armitage, the two sailors and Capt. Daniels seemed somewhat embarrassed, while the stylish Mr. Selwyn seemed uneasy.

"Mr. Selwyn," said Capt. Daniels, at last, "will not get out. He is making the sacrifice for the family—and for a price. When the trick is discovered he will be punished—probably imprisoned for years. But he has come with us from New York to do it, and he will go through with it. He volunteered to do it."

Dick looked at the man who was willing to sacrifice his liberty, if not his life, for another, and saw him trembling. The face above the beard looked pale, even in the darkness. No wonder Mr. Selwyn was pale. It was a terrible ordeal. It was an awful thing to put one's self voluntarily into a condemned cell in order to release another. Few men could show such nerve.

"If he fails," said Capt. Daniels, "we'll break into the prison and—Hark!"

"It's nothing," said one of the sailors; "merely the clown down yonder."

"Now," said Miss Armitage, "are you ready, Mr. Selwyn? It is time."

There was silence among the group. The man addressed began to tremble violently. His cane dropped from his quaking hand. He dropped his gloves. Suddenly he surprised them all by throwing off the long dark coat, the tall hat and his false beard and crying out:

"Take back your things and don't ask me to keep my promise! I can't do it. At the last moment I must back out. It is too terrible. Forgive me, Miss Armitage. I thought I could make the sacrifice, but I can't. Good-by, forever!"

The poor fellow stood staring at them for a moment and then turned around and fled away in the darkness. At the eleventh hour his nerve had failed him. It was too terrible to take the place of a convicted murderer in the condemned cell.

"What are we to do?" exclaimed Miss Armitage, faintly, who would have fallen to the ground but for the support of Capt. Daniels' arm. "There is no one to save poor Charlie now. He will be hanged in forty-eight hours! Oh, there is no one to save my poor brother!"

"Yes, there is," said Dick Nesbitt, calmly, throwing his cap to the ground and picking up the tall hat.

"Who? who?" cried Capt. Daniels and Miss Armitage together.

"I will," returned Dick, quietly, and before one of them could speak he had donned Selwyn's discarded coat, hat and false beard, and stood before them, holding the gloves in one hand and lightly swinging the cane with the other.

"God bless you," said Miss Armitage, and in those words he got his reward, for the sight of her beauty and her pathetic grief had moved him to do the deed of a hero. The two sailors stared at him in amazement.

"Come, Miss Armitage, we'll start," said Dick, and, with the grace of an eighteenth century courtier, he offered her his arm.

Silently they walked arm-in-arm around the prison wall. The warden's office was open to them. Courteous permission was granted and three armed guards were told off to accompany them to the condemned man's cell. Dick walked with erect head and even tread. No one could know he was performing a deed that would make

most men quail. No eye could see a sign that he was daunted by the horrors that were before him. His bearing was admirable.

"Just a word," he whispered, as she murmured something of gratitude; "I must say my good-by here. It is likely I shall never see you again. Will you think of me?"

"Always. God bless you for your noble act," was her reply, and she squeezed his hand.

"Then I'm satisfied and ready," said Dick, and with that they came to the door of the awful place he was voluntarily condemning himself to for her and her brother's sake.

The guards threw it open and the two walked in. Not till Miss Armitage had caught the chill, the gloom, the frightful horror of the murderer's cell did she fully realize the noble life sacrifice Dick Nesbitt was making for her.

He was in the cell now and face to face with the man he had come to rescue from the gallows at such fearful cost.

CHAPTER XII.

It was an exciting scene that took place that night in the condemned cell of the Qu'Appelle jail.

Could the guard who stood inside the door and those who walked up and down past it outside have understood the situation, they would have been amazed.

The three chief characters stood in strange relation to one another—Miss Armitage trying to help her brother, her brother trying to get out to escape the scaffold, Dick Nesbitt—apparently the coolest of the three—voluntarily trying to take the prisoner's place, all under cover of a sister's last interview with the condemned man.

When the warden had asked: "Who is this man that accompanies you?" referring to Dick, Miss Armitage had answered: "It is my lover." Wildly Dick's heart beat, and to the warden he had said, truthfully: "Yes, I am her lover."

He now stood calmly looking on, while Charlie and his sister were clasped in each other's arms. He listened to their sobs, he saw the look of horror on the prisoner's face, and his signs of awful suffering, and yet he did not flinch in his resolution. He looked at the solid walls, the bars and bolts and armed guard, and not once did he regret his chivalrous offer.

One thing he did, however, and that was to scrutinize the prisoner to see if he looked like an innocent or a guilty man. It would be some satisfaction if he could be assured the man he was making the sacrifice for was worthy of it.

The scrutiny more than satisfied him. Charlie Armitage was a slight, handsome young fellow, with a frank, honest face—not the man to commit a foul deed. Dick's sharp eyes noticed that he had taken his sufferings hard. A pale, haggard face and bloodshot eyes told of constant brooding over the awful scaffold. It nerved Dick's heart to see all this. It made his task easier. Presently he advanced and shook hands with the prisoner, as if he had long known him.

This was to deceive the guard, who, as duty prompted him, stood at the door and watched the scene. Charlie gave Dick's hand a great squeeze, and his eyes looked the gratitude his tongue failed to speak. He who knew the horrors of the cell could appreciate what Dick was going

to do. Presently he caught his sister's hand, and Dick drew them both to one of the innermost corners.

"This guard doesn't hear very well," he whispered. "We may talk a moment."

"There is no time for that," said Dick, quietly.

"No time to thank you?" exclaimed Charlie. "Tell me why you do this for me?"

Dick stood silent a moment, with the eyes of brother and sister on him. Then he leaned over, and, placing his hand on Charlie's shoulder, whispered in his ear these words:

"For your sister's sake. I am very fond of her. Don't tell her till you get home. Then ask her to think of me once in a while."

Charlie squeezed his hand again, and, giving him a meaning look, said: "Don't fear."

Miss Armitage hearing nothing, innocently murmured: "God bless you, Mr. Nesbitt," and Dick smiled.

Now came the time of parting, which was also the moment that called for quick and clever action.

"Oh, good-by, Charlie," said Miss Armitage, and she and her brother again placed their arms around each other's neck and sobbed in such a way as actually to force the guard to turn his face away. The man, accustomed as he was to hard scenes, was overcome by this pathetic farewell. With his hand on the door he turned his back on the three people in the corner of the cell and wiped his moist eyes.

This was the moment calculated upon for quick, silent action. In a twinkling Dick had slipped off his coat and hat and handed them to Charlie, who put them on. He adjusted the beard to Charlie's face, handed the cane and gloves to him, and then took the latter's place. That is to say, he took Miss Armitage in his arms and let her head rest on his shoulder. The guard looked around for a moment and saw nothing amiss. But this is what he might have seen had it not been for the semi-darkness of the cell—Charlie Armitage completely disguised as a stylish gentleman, by the beard and habiliments Dick had come in with, and Dick holding the lady clasped in his arms.

"Oh, good-by, my dear brother," sobbed Miss Armitage, keeping up the show to deceive the guard.

Dick was keeping up the show, too, for the same reason, and an additional one, the last being that his heart was in it in all earnestness. His good-by was sincere and real.

"Farewell, my love," he muttered, in a low voice. "I will think of you to the last. There is no one in the world so dear to me," and he kissed her.

She did not resent it, though she must have guessed there was more than acting in it. The noble sacrifice of the poor fellow she perhaps understood now. Indeed, there were real tears in her eyes.

The guard interrupted a long farewell, and then Dick got the surprise of his life—ay, and doomed as he was, the most agreeable. Miss Armitage, while tearing herself away, still sobbing, as was necessary, leaned quickly forward and kissed him.

Next moment her brother was helping her out of the cell, and Dick was staggering back into a corner.

Charlie played his part well. He was fighting for his life. As the two went forth from the cell he kept his face covered with his handkerchief and sobbed, while with

his other arm he supported his sister, who also sobbed. They went down the corridor with one guard ahead of them and two behind, as before.

So far the trick had not been detected. The chance of ultimate escape was good. Capt. Daniels and his sailors outside the walls might have no need to adopt the other planned alternative, which had been to attempt a rescue by force.

All went well till they came out of the corridor and were about to emerge from the jail door. Then one of the guards said: "You must go out through the warden's office, as you come in."

"Is that necessary?" asked Miss Armitage. "Can't we cross the jail yard and get out by yonder gate?"

The poor thing was anxious to avoid the lighted office of the warden and the sharp eyes of him and his officials. "Not without permission," answered the same guard.

"Come on," whispered Charlie, squeezing his sister's hand.

Like herself, he was almost fainting from suppressed excitement and fear. The danger of the moment, the awful dread of detection, of going back to that horrible cell, of bidding farewell to hope, of giving up his young life on the gloomy scaffold, and breaking his sister's and mother's hearts, weakened him so that he felt like a child. He would have given much to have the strong arm, the ready wit and the fearless soul of Dick Nesbitt with him at that moment.

One of the guards became suspicious and whispered to his companion. The third one walked on with Miss Armitage and her escort. They were going toward the warden's office.

"Heavens, we are lost!" thought Charlie, who noticed the suspicion; but he walked on with his sister, following the guard who had stood in the cell, and who was slightly deaf.

But the men behind worried him, and he looked at them again. One of them had run back into the prison; the other was hurrying after them, evidently with a suspicion in his mind.

"Excuse me," he said, catching up to Charlie and looking into his face. Then without a word he walked rapidly past them and the deaf guard toward the warden's office.

His object was clear. He was going to communicate his suspicions to the warden, so that the couple could be stopped while passing through the office and examined.

That moment there came a shout from the eastern wall and a whistle.

"Here, quick!" cried a voice from there. "Don't enter the office."

Two figures were seated astride of the wall. They had just seen the action of the guards, and knew it meant danger.

Charlie saw them, and instantly squeezed his sister's hand.

"Run, Claire! For God's sake, quick, or I'm lost!" he cried, and catching her arm he drew her back from the side of the deaf guard and ran with her toward the wall.

All hope of escape by the warden's office had been cut off. The shadows on the paper blinds of the windows showed that there was a commotion inside, the suspicious guard having told his story.

CHAPTER XIII.

We will return to Dick.

When the cell door closed upon him, leaving him alone, he slipped off his coat and vest and threw himself down in a corner, his object being to look as much as possible like Charlie Armitage in case any of the guards should look in.

Now for the first time there came a full realization of his awful position, voluntarily assumed. He saw all its horror, but he did not regret his act. He was satisfied to be here if it only made happy the beautiful girl that was now as dear to him as a sister. Oh, how he prayed that her brother would succeed in escaping. Where were they now? Had they got through the warden's office yet? He was in an agony of suspense. He was assailed by hope and fear.

Not for a moment did he dream that relief might soon come to himself. He did not think of such a thing. He really believed he was destined to be a prisoner for years to come.

He did not know what fate had in store for him.

Who could have supposed that he was to have a chance for liberty, almost immediately?

It was one of those remarkable freaks of destiny that sometimes disport themselves in crises.

The cell door opened and a guard poked his head in.

Strange that Dick should guess the cause of the man's sudden appearance. The mind is unusually active at such times. This guard was the one who had turned back at the outer door after whispering to his companion. He had come to see if his suspicions were right—if the prisoner has escaped, if another man had exchanged places with him.

Dick lay still, holding his breath. His quick instinct told him that, with one chance in a million, he was about to get that chance, slender as it was. He was cunning enough to sob as if his heart was broken, and to muffle his sobs with his arm.

The guard at the door could not see distinctly enough. He was obliged to take a few steps into the cell. He stopped. Dick continued his sobbing. The guard spoke. Dick sobbed more loudly, and did not look up. He was determined to bring the man closer. The darkness of the cell was aiding him.

It was a dramatic moment. There was a life playing for a life. There was a cool, quick brain ready to grasp every chance, a strong eye and arm ready to help it.

It all happened quickly.

The guard was determined to test his suspicions. Getting no answer from the prostrate, sobbing figure in the corner, he made a spring forward, caught Dick's arm and looked into his face. That was the instant the remarkable thing happened.

Dick grasped the man's leg, and the same moment leaped to his feet. Over went the guard, completely losing his equilibrium. Dick had him by the throat before he could move. He had him silenced before he could cry out. He placed his hand on his mouth.

But the guard had strength, and above all he had courage and respect for his duty. A terrible struggle began—a struggle in which Dick was slightly handicapped by the necessity of keeping his hand on the man's mouth and preventing him from calling for help. He was ren-

dered more desperate by sounds that came to his ears, that he would not have heard but for the open cell door.

There were cries of: "Prisoner escaping! Help, help! Here, quick!" and others; and Dick knew that Charlie's attempt had been discovered, and that an exciting scene was taking place in the yard. Capt. Daniels and his men had no doubt come to the rescue.

It rendered Dick more desperate for two reasons. He knew Miss Armitage was in danger, and he knew that his own chances of escape were improved. In fact, this was the chance of his life. If he did not escape now he might be a prisoner for years, for he had learned that the law in Quebec is exceedingly severe on those who help prisoners to escape, especially prisoners under sentence of death.

It was now or never. The attention of the guards was no doubt taken up with the struggle outside. They were likely to forget the condemned cell. Only this guard stood in his immediate way.

After a wrestle for a full minute Dick made a sudden, stupendous effort and threw the guard completely from him. The latter's foot caught in the sleeve of Dick's coat lying on the floor. He went headlong forward, striking his forehead against the hard wall.

He dropped to the floor senseless.

It was a pure accident, but an opportune one for Dick. He stooped down and saw that, while the man was wholly unconscious, he was by no means dangerously hurt, and would soon revive. The poor fellow's hat had fallen off, and the sight of it gave Dick an inspiration.

He would don the man's uniform.

He could gain an advantage by passing as a guard, and the gloom of the prison and the darkness outside would help him.

In a twinkling he had the man's coat off. Two seconds later he was hurrying down the corridor in the uniform of a guard. It had all happened very quickly.

He could still hear the noise in the yard, but above it all he could hear those other loud noises, not far away from the prison. Of the drums, the bagpipes and the singers, that had never ceased from the moment they had first started, and that had been designed to aid the escape by attracting and holding the attention of the villagers, and, if possible, the turnkeys, and drowning out all other sounds. He had no trouble in getting out of the prison.

The sight he saw in the yard almost deprived him of his new-born hope.

The attempt at escape had been discovered, and that before the fugitives had reached the warden's office.

Charlie and Miss Armitage were now near the eastern wall.

Three of the guards had got within a few feet of them, and were just about to seize them. On the wall were two men with ropes ready to draw them up. There were sounds indicating that some parties outside the small gate were trying to force it. A bell rang in the warden's office.

Dick bounded across the yard, and arrived at the scene just in time to see Miss Armitage seized by one official and Charlie by the other.

"Hands off them," he said, in a low voice. "Show the lady respect. The warden wants them brought to the office. You're not to shoot on any account."

The excitement of the moment was intense.

What with the din of noise, the calling of the men on

the wall, the attempt at escape itself and the semi-darkness, the three guards were perplexed, and bewildered. They saw Dick's uniform, heard his words, and took their hands off the prisoners.

That moment there was a crash on the small gate near at hand, and it came falling into the yard with a big log after it. The log had been a battering ram in the hands of Capt. Daniels' sailors.

Dick spoke an order, and the guards, mistaking him for one of themselves, ran to the gate. They were quickly overpowered, just as the warden's office opened and a couple of men came out. Dick whispered to Charlie, and seizing Miss Armitage in his arms, made for the gate.

Never was an escape executed more neatly. The guards had not had time to use their revolvers. The three of them had their wrists bound in a flash by eight stalwart sailors, captained by Gillans, who, with a companion, had deserted the wall which they had climbed to keep attention from the gate.

"It is I—Nesbitt," said Dick, loudly, for in his uniform he was mistaken for a guard by his own friends.

"You?" cried Capt. Daniels. "Quick, they're coming!"

Dick got through the gateway with his precious burden and passed the sailors, who were still attending to the guards, and Charlie followed him. Miss Armitage was set on her feet, and the four made for the top of the hill, leaving the sailors to check the jail officials, as had been arranged.

But Dick did not let go of Miss Armitage's hand except for a moment while he was throwing off the guard's coat, that had served its purpose. He asked permission to carry her, but she said she was strong enough to run. She had uttered more than one cry of joy since first recognizing him.

"Oh, Mr. Nesbitt, thank God you are free!" she murmured.

"This way. We must try to get past that clump of trees as soon as possible," said Capt. Daniels, leading them along the hill. "Do you hear that bell?"

"The alarm bell," said Charlie. "It will arouse the whole town. The officials at the supper will hear it."

"Faster, faster," said the captain. "We're far from being out of danger yet."

"Oh, don't let poor Charlie be taken now," said Miss Armitage, and in momentary weakness she stopped, and would have fallen but for Dick.

"Let me help you," said Capt. Daniels, seeing that Dick was about to carry her.

"No, no, I can run. I am strong," said the brave girl, and with renewed strength she kept pace with the others, Dick and her brother assisting her.

There could now be heard a perfect uproar about the jail. Shots were fired, and these, with the shouts and the ringing of the bell and the noise of the performers and the motley musicians, made a din that was awful.

"What about the poor sailors?" asked Dick, suddenly, as they turned onto a path running straight down the hill to the river. "Will they not be caught?"

"Don't fear for them," said Capt. Daniels. "They'll get away safe. They've left the gate before this."

"But they were there when we left, and the other guards were coming."

Capt. Daniels did not reply till they had reached the foot of the hill.

"The eight sailors are safer than we are," he said. "They will not take to flight till the last moment, and will then make off in a different direction—to the south, yonder, in order to divert attention from us. They have a wagon and a team of horses hidden a quarter of a mile away."

"Hark!" said Charlie, suddenly. "What's that?"

The four stopped in their flight and availed themselves of the shadow of a group of trees. They were startled by the voices of men calling to one another a short distance away.

"Shall we make for the vessel?" asked Dick, after looking in the direction of the voices and seeing no one.

"No, we must stay in the shadow here," said Capt. Daniels. "These men are close. The vessel is too far off."

Miss Armitage shivered with fear and kept close to Dick and her brother, who, poor fellow, was trembling also. He had ever in his mind the gloomy cell and the awful scaffold.

A few minutes passed. No sounds were heard except the noises that came from the prison.

"It's unsafe to wait much longer," said Capt. Daniels. "We had better——"

"Hold! For heaven's sake keep in the shadow," whispered Dick. "Look forward!"

He pointed to the hilltop.

There, near the head of the path by which they had descended were several men moving about excitedly and talking to one another. They were town authorities and guards.

The flight of the sailors to the south had failed to effect its purpose. The situation of the four fugitives was critical.

They crouched down in the shadow of the trees.

CHAPTER XIV.

There was nothing for the four to do but remain in the shadow of the trees while the searchers were on the hill. They would be seen if they attempted to cross the open space between them and the river, because the moon, which had just risen, was at the full, and objects could be plainly seen in the clearing.

"We are in an awful position," said Capt. Daniels. "We're certain to be seen if we make for the boat."

"Hush, captain," whispered Dick. "We must not frighten Miss Armitage."

"You're right," returned the captain, and then added, aloud: "Don't fear, Miss Armitage. We'll get you and your brother safely to the vessel."

"God grant it," said the girl, clinging tremblingly to her brother.

"Look," said Charlie, "those men have left the hilltop. They're not in sight. Can't we make for the vessel now?"

"No, no, Charlie. Better stay here a little longer," said Capt. Daniels. "Listen."

The din of noise in the vicinity of the prison had not ceased. The troop of performers were certainly doing their work well. They were keeping up the excitement and the uproar to bewilder the prison and town authorities, and it was due to them that the fugitives had succeeded even this far. The sailors had fled to the south soon after their escape, but they had failed to draw more

than four pursuers after them. One of the guards whose hands had been tied had seen the girl and her three companions running eastward along the hill, and had told the warden of it.

This accounted for the searchers on the hill. There were eight of them, four of them being townspeople in authority, and the others prison officials. They were now in concealment near the head of the hill path, listening and looking down into the valley below. They were certain that the fugitives could not yet have reached the river, and they rightly guessed they were hiding somewhere.

It was lucky, therefore, for our friends that they did not emerge from the shadow of the trees. Charlie was still in favor of making a dash for the boat, but Capt. Daniels and Dick counseled further waiting.

"If we wait longer there will be pursuers in every direction," said Charlie. "Nothing but your band of performers has prevented a hundred men being sent out after us now. Every moment means additional danger."

"It's dangerous to move while there's anyone on the hill," said Dick, straining his eyes to pierce through the interstices of the foliage.

"How far is it to the boat?" pursued Charlie. The poor fellow was impatient to put the horrors of his cell behind him. He wanted to push on.

"Over half a mile," said Capt. Daniels. "See yonder bush and the jutting piece of land? It's past that."

"Hush," said Miss Armitage. "I hear voices."

To their horror they heard the noise of men descending the hill and talking in low tones to one another.

"Hadn't we better make a dash for it, captain?" said Dick.

"No, not yet. Lie down, all of you, quick."

Miss Armitage and her brother crept into a thicket, and the other two lay flat on the grass.

The voices came nearer.

Dick, looking out from his place of concealment, saw eight men going searching among the bushes at the foot of the hill. They would soon arrive at this place, which was not over thirty yards from the foot of the hill.

It was too bad that the young man should be captured again. It was awful to contemplate; yet to Dick it seemed almost certain that in a few moments they must be discovered.

Presently he was horrified in hearing voices in another direction. He looked up the river bank toward the village, and saw four or five figures running toward the tree that stood away out in front of Mr. Beauchamp's office.

"More pursuers," he whispered to Capt. Daniels, and then the two held their breath and listened to the voices of the eight men, who were gradually getting closer.

"Where can they have gone?" they heard one man say.

"That's the warden himself," whispered Charlie from the thicket.

"Hush," said Dick. "They're coming straight toward us."

"Look yonder! There they are," cried the warden again.

"Where?" asked the others.

Our four friends were shivering with fright and horror. They could hear the eight searchers running toward them.

Nearer and nearer came their footsteps. Charlie would have cried out in terror but for Dick, who whispered a caution to him at the last moment.

The eight men came bounding on, entered the clump of trees where the four fugitives lay concealed, and passed out again on the west side without seeing them. They had come within twenty feet of the hiding place.

"Good heavens, they have missed us by an accident," said Dick, rising to his knees.

"Yes," said Capt. Daniels, creeping to his side. "Where have they gone? What saved us?"

"The other voices. Look yonder."

The warden and his seven followers could be seen running up the river bank toward Mr. Beauchamp's office. They had seen the figures at the tree and mistaken them for the fugitives. It turned out afterwards that these figures were five of the band of performers who had purposely run thither to attract attention. Others of the band were on the opposite side of the village, trying to divert attention in a similar way.

Dick whispered to the captain, and the latter said: "Yes, now is our time. We can probably reach the boat before they have discovered their mistake and get back."

"This group of trees will shield us also," said Dick.

Charlie and his sister emerged from the thicket at the captain's call. They were both weak from fright.

"Have courage, Miss Armitage," said Dick, taking her arm. "Your brother will yet be saved."

The four left the shelter of the trees and started at a running pace eastward. At Dick's suggestion they did not head immediately toward the cape, as it would put them in view of the men up the river. They rather kept close to the hill, so that the clump of trees might be behind them and thus shield them.

On they ran, their hearts beating fast, their hopes rising and falling. Capt. Daniels assisted Charlie, while Dick boldly kept his arm around Miss Armitage's waist and helped her along. To him it was a glorious night, despite the danger. Even as they went they knew that the performance in the village had already been broken up. The strains of music no longer came to their ears. The disaster that had happened at the jail—the escape of the condemned man—had got to the ears of all and eclipsed in interest everything else. Search parties were quickly made up, many of the citizens loyal to the law offering their services. Before the fugitives had left their last hiding place six bands of searchers had gone out of the village in different directions to scour the country.

So that our friends, though they knew it not, were at this moment being searched for by nearly fifty persons, jail officials and civilians. Their situation was dangerous in the extreme. It would prove worse if any part of their prearranged plan should miscarry.

They ran on till they reached a point where the hill abruptly turned toward the river. This brought them directly opposite the wooded cape. To reach that place and the pathway leading down to where their boat had been left concealed, it was necessary to cross a wide clearing where the moonlight would stream down upon them and make them visible to the searchers up the river. The latter they could not now see on account of the little bush that had been their hiding place.

"We must risk it," said Dick. "It is only about six hundred yards.

"But for a quarter of a mile of that we can be seen,"

said Charlie, shivering at the prospect of the broad, cleared space and the moonlight.

"Come," said Capt. Daniels, "we must try to reach the bush. Our boat is but a short distance from there, and our vessel is at anchor out in the river."

Miss Armitage, pale-faced and frightened, gave her hand to Dick, and the four set off at a run to gain the shelter of the bush on the cape to the north.

A portion of this was the most dangerous part of their flight, as they had to pass in view of the place where they had last seen the eight men.

On they ran.

Dick at last saw the tree away up the river, and, horror of horrors! the figures of the search party a considerable distance this side of it.

The searchers had not yet seen them. If three hundred yards more could be covered without drawing their attention, there might still be hope.

The four refrained from speaking, and kept close together in a body so as to be as little noticeable as possible.

There was but a single tree in their path. It stood halfway to the edge of the wood. As they neared it Dick fancied he saw a figure step behind it. He made no mention of the fact to his companions, but got his fists ready for an attack if necessary. Just as they got to the tree this figure sprang out from behind it, ran out into the clearing and shouted, wildly waving his hands.

It was the red-haired Briggs. True to his master, Livingston, he was trying to prevent the prisoner's escape.

"You scoundrel," cried Dick, and he would have rushed after him to strangle him but for Capt. Daniels and Miss Armitage.

"We're lost!" said the lady, and she pointed to the river bank.

"Good heavens!" said the terrified Charlie. "They're coming, and the man is still shouting."

This was true. The search party had heard the shouts, and now saw the figures of the fugitives silhouetted against the sky, for the cleared space was a high piece of ground, while the hill gradually sloped down before it and turned southward.

They were coming, running as fast as they could, and Briggs, still shouting, was hurrying to meet them.

When he did meet them he did not stop, but merely shouted and ran to the water's edge and got into a boat.

"We just have a chance," said Capt. Daniels, as the four ran toward the eastern edge of the wood. "At the foot of the bank is our boat. If we can reach that and get out on the river a bit before they arrive we may succeed in getting into the vessel."

"They will shoot at the boat," said Charlie, puffing and panting from the run.

"We must take chances," said the captain. "Faster, faster!"

"Yes, for God's sake, faster," said Dick. "They are running like mad. We have not a quarter of a mile's start."

He almost carried Miss Armitage now. He did not release his hold till they had passed the edge of the woods and arrived near the top of the high bank.

Charlie turned his head for a moment and uttered an exclamation of fright.

Their pursuers had reached the other edge of the wood.

They had even paused to question Briggs. They were calling loudly for the prisoner to stop and surrender or they would shoot.

"Down the bank and into the boat, quick," cried Capt. Daniels. "Nesbitt, you must help me row to the vessel."

The four of them fairly plunged down the bank, Charlie and the captain arriving in a heap at the bottom. They ran to the water's edge; the rowboat was there. They looked out to the river, ran their eyes up and down the horizon, and then as the shouts of their pursuers rang loudly through the trees just above their heads, they turned and stared into one another's faces in blank despair.

The situation was one of unspeakable horror.

"Good God, we're lost!" groaned Capt. Daniels. "That scoundrel Livingston has been at work!"

Their vessel was gone!

CHAPTER XV.

It was a terrible moment. With the shouts of their pursuers ringing in their ears, the four fugitives stood helplessly looking into one another's faces, and then out to the river, where no sign of their vessel or other craft was to be seen. But for the strong mind of one in the party they would have been hopelessly lost. Dick Nesbitt had the brain to cope with just such emergencies.

After the first shock he pulled himself together. The loud shouting told that the search party were climbing the little hill. In another moment they would be on the bank.

Dick's eyes dropped on the rowboat.

"Into it, quick!" he cried, "the three of you. Let Charlie and Miss Armitage lie down. I will run through the woods and take them off the track. You, captain, row to the cape point and meet me."

That was all he said. The captain grasped his meaning, and immediately urged Charlie into the boat. Dick had already lifted Miss Armitage into it. The captain snapped the chain, leaped in and picked up the oars. Dick ran in an oblique line up the bank shouting:

The men arrived on the top of the bank, and were immediately bewildered by what they saw and heard. The first thing they noticed was a man just disappearing among the trees a little to their left, who was shouting, "Help! Help! Don't let them take me." Then they saw the rowboat a few feet out on the water, with apparently only one person in it, rowing leisurely.

The rower bore no resemblance to the escaped prisoner.

Following their instinct, they turned into the bush after the man who had cried out for help. They looked once more at the boat and saw it heading for the center of the river. They got the impression that it would not come near the shore line of the cape on which was the wood they were now going to search.

Thus were they deceived by the cleverness of Dick, who had once more put his life in danger to save the girl and her brother.

"Don't let them take me," he shouted again. "Help me—save me!"

In running into this bush he was putting himself into the narrowest of traps, for the width of the cape, where it joined the land, was not great. Four men with revolvers, standing at equal distances apart at the edge of the wood,

and at the entrance to it, could make it impossible for Dick to get out on the land side. To emerge on any other side he would have to swim, for the cape was really a wooded peninsula, triangular in shape, containing about a hundred acres.

Though he knew it not, the precaution just named was taken. The warden ordered four of his men to go outside of the wood and stand there with cocked revolvers. He and the other three made after the fugitive, to whom they got so close that they thought that in another moment they must catch him.

Dick had let them get close purposely, to draw them on all the more. He was ready to risk his life to the fullest extent for a thankful word from the lady. He leaped over fallen trees, tore through clumps of bushes with all the noise possible, and ran generally in a zig-zag course to give the boat time to get well out on the river. He kept this up for about two minutes, and then changed his policy for his own safety. He began making as little noise as possible, in order to steal away from his pursuers altogether. He was getting nearer and nearer to the point of the cape, and thus in greater danger, for, if the men got near him there they could hem him in and surround him.

He stopped and listened. There was silence. The men had been listening too.

A sudden noise, the crashing of branches near him, made him plunge forward again at full speed. He had been almost taken.

He stopped again. He was afraid to get too near the point of the cape, for it narrowed so that he must be captured.

He listened.

The men were spreading out to make sure that they would not miss him.

He was obliged to go on again, though he would have been glad to have given Capt. Daniels time to bring the boat near the point.

Of all the dangers he had personally undergone, he found this the most exciting. There was no wide tract of country before him to afford him a chance to run, but instead, there was water on three sides of him, and only about twenty acres of bush left in which to elude his pursuers. He was tempted to seek a hiding place, lie down and take chances.

He ran at full speed for some yards, and then turned and stole with as little noise as possible toward the right bank of the cape. He saw a tree that was hollow at the bottom. The hole faced the river. Standing behind the tree, he heard his pursuers running. From the sounds they made and their voices, he knew they were too far away to see him, but they would see him if he waited a few seconds longer for them to come up.

He stooped and crawled into the hole in the trunk of the tree. He stood upright, with his head and shoulders concealed, but his body and legs partly exposed. If anyone came near enough they must notice him.

He had no sooner put himself in this hole than he regretted it. Of all the uncomfortable and dangerous positions, it was the worst. He was unable to stir, let alone to defend himself. In case of discovery he would be completely at the men's mercy. They would even handcuff him before taking him out.

"Good gracious, why did I do this?" he thought, as

he listened to the sounds of the men running about here and there looking for him. One of them passed just in front of the tree, exchanged some words with a companion, and came back.

Dick thought sure he was caught. He held his breath. The perspiration was oozing from every pore in his body. He would have given worlds to be in a position where he could fight his danger when it actually came.

The footsteps and voices came nearer again. He listened to conjectures as to where he was, and he heard enough to tell him that he was supposed to be the prisoner.

Presently the warden cried out: "Here, men, let the four of us spread out in a line and walk slowly toward the point. He must be ahead of us."

They were cheering words for Dick. He began to hope again. He stood as still as a statue, and listened to them till their footsteps died away.

"Is it safe to go out now?" he thought. "Could that possibly have been a trick? There may be one left to watch."

Hardly had the thought crossed his mind when he was startled by a loud report within a few yards of him. One of the men had remained, and his revolver had been accidentally discharged.

"What's that?" cried the warden's voice, from a distance.

"It's me," shouted a man a few feet from Dick's hiding place.

"There's a boat coming here," said the other.

The man near Dick evidently mistook it for the order, "Come here," for, to Dick's infinite relief, he started off at a run to join his companions.

Dick lost no time in getting out of the tree, where his nerves had undergone such a test. He turned and stole back cautiously toward the entrance to the bush.

When he had proceeded about twenty yards, he again turned—this time to the left. It brought him to the bank of the river, and there he saw, away out on the water, the rowboat heading for the point of the cape. It was coming to meet him.

"Heavens!" he gasped, "Miss Armitage and Charlie will be taken. The men are now at the point and watching the boat."

How could he prevent this catastrophe? There was only a few moments of time, for the boat had less than one hundred and fifty yards to go. He was afraid to shout, for this would lead to his own capture.

He put his hand in his vest pocket, and found a match.

He quickly gathered an armful of dry leaves, and bringing them down to the water's edge, lighted the match and set fire to them.

The flame caught them, but they did not burn fast, nor did they make much light.

He was trying to attract Capt. Daniels' attention.

He put his hand in his trouser's pocket, and found the very thing required, namely, Livingston's letter of warning that he had captured from Briggs. He tore it out of the envelope, spread it out and touched both it and the envelope to the flame. The leaves caught the flame and made a little blaze. He held the burning letter up to his head and waved his arm. When the flame went out he again looked out on the water, and saw the boat had stopped.

Capt. Daniels had seen the signal, at all events. Whether he understood it or not was a question.

Dick ran up to the bank to get more leaves. He reached the top and stopped short, panting and breathless, for he heard men running toward him. He turned to the water again and saw the boat moving toward the shore, but whether toward the cape point or his own position he could not make out.

The men were getting very close. They had probably seen the blaze. It would not do to remain in this place of danger any longer, and it would be worse to run away while the occupants of the boat was in danger. They would draw up to the shore and be shot or captured.

He looked out again. Yes, the boat was coming straight to shore, and the men in the bush had caught sight of it.

They were now standing still, keeping back among the trees so that it would be sure to come, and they were also so close to Dick, being back a little on the bank just above his head, that they knew they could catch him at any time.

Dick rushed to the water's edge, and making a trumpet of his hands, shouted:

"Boat ahoy, there! Boat ahoy!"

He was not going to let his friends walk into danger.

"Don't come ashore," he shouted. "Keep back," and then, before the men on the bank could guess his intention, he plunged headlong into the water.

"Prisoner escaping! Fire upon him!" cried the warden, seeing that instead of capturing both parties he was going to lose the prisoner himself, whom he supposed Dick to be.

Bang! bang! Shot after shot was fired at the dark object in the water, nor did the men cease, even temporarily, till they heard a faint cry come from that object, and then saw it sink.

CHAPTER XVI.

It seemed a miracle that Dick escaped the bullets that fell around him like hail in the water. When about a dozen yards out, he caused himself to sink in the water, to give the impression he had been struck. He swam, too, as far as he could, beneath the surface. When he appeared again, making greater efforts than before, the men on the bank resumed the shooting, while the warden shouted frantically to his other four men to secure a boat.

The shooting had one good effect—it let Capt. Daniels know just where Dick was. In the moonlight he saw the object struggling in the water, and also saw the flashes of the men's revolvers.

"Lie as low as you can in the bottom of the boat," he whispered, to Miss Armitage and her brother. "We must risk the shots for the poor fellow."

He turned the boat's head a little, and rowed as fast as he could toward the shore.

"Back!" cried Dick, seeing his intention and immediately thinking of Miss Armitage. "Don't come closer," he shouted, a little later. "Back, I say. Don't put the lady in danger."

"The lady?" exclaimed a voice ashore.

"Fire, men; fire! Lady or no lady! Two of you run and get a boat, quick!"

Over two dozen shots were fired, and still Dick was far from being out of range. And, worse still—at least to him—the boat, with its precious burden, was also coming into range.

"Back!" he cried again. "I beg you, don't expose her, captain."

Even as he spoke a bullet whizzed by his ear, while others fell on all sides of him. It made his heart beat violently to be so dangerously near to death. With each stroke he took he heard the click, click of bullets in the water close to him.

The boat was coming in spite of his remonstrance, but was still about fifty yards away. He swam hard to meet it. He had caught sight of something that elevated his hopes, and, as the captain's face was turned in that direction, he knew he must have seen it, too. It was a pretty large vessel, that had come into view past the point of the cape, and to his surprise it was turning into the bay where the excited scene was going on.

"The *Janet*," cried Capt. Daniels, in a low voice. "Livingston didn't run away, after all."

A shot struck the prow of the boat, and Miss Armitage screamed. The shooting, which was still being kept up, was terrifying her and her brother. The latter was brave enough to sit up, and indeed, had wished to do so, but Capt. Daniels had made him lie down.

Presently the swimmer was reached. Dick's hand caught the gunwale, and Capt. Daniels helped him aboard.

"Lie down," said the captain, interrupting Miss Armitage's exclamation of joy; but Dick would not lie down.

He seized the other pair of oars, and immediately began to help the captain to take the craft out of danger.

Charlie had already tried to use these oars, but his sister and the captain had forced him to keep in shelter, so that there might not appear to be more than one person in the boat.

The greatest excitement prevailed on shore. A second search party had arrived, and learned the situation. Messengers were dispatched for boats, and others were sent to the telegraph office, so that warnings might be forwarded to other places up and down the river. It seemed impossible for Charlie to escape.

The large vessel came to a stop near the place where it had been anchored before, and then it was seen that Livingston's yacht was being towed behind it.

"Good gracious, what does that mean?" exclaimed Capt. Daniels, looking over his shoulder without ceasing to row.

"It has been Livingston's work," said Dick.

"I can't think he meant wrong by it," said Miss Armitage. "Because he voluntarily offered to help us, and he has come back."

"Surely, I can sit up now," said Charlie, rising. "I hated to lie down while you were exposed to those shots, captain."

"It was all that the men might not see you, boy; but they see you now. Hello, what's up!"

"A boat! It's coming round the point yonder. Look!" exclaimed Miss Armitage. "It has several men in it."

"Yes, and they're after us," said the captain.

At this moment a whistle was heard on the deck of the *Janet*. It was followed by a voice, which called out:

"Come on, quick! I have everything ready."

"Livingston," muttered Dick. "Blessed if I know what to think," he added to himself.

In truth, Dick was puzzled with Livingston's course of action. He had not been so much surprised when he had found the vessel gone, though he had wondered how Livingston got hold of it. He had not been made aware that it was left in the man's charge.

That Livingston now brought it back, at such an opportune time, and that he was trying to give real help, caused Dick to keep quiet, for the simple reason that he did not know what to make of it. The boat which had rounded the cape was fast bearing down upon them. A man standing up in its stern shouted:

"Prisoner, surrender! Everyone aiding you will be punished. You are all liable to be shot, if you don't instantly surrender to the law."

"The deuce," grunted Capt. Daniels, giving his oars a more vigorous pull.

"Steady, captain," said Dick. "Back water. We are at the vessel's side."

"There's another boat pulling out from land," exclaimed Charlie.

"Oh, quick!" cried Miss Armitage. "Quick, don't let my poor brother be taken!"

"He'll not be taken," said Dick. "Have courage, Miss Armitage."

"Thank Heaven you're here," said Livingston, leaning over the deck rail. "Pass Miss Armitage up first. Quick, that rowboat's almost here."

"Stop!" whispered Dick, in Capt. Daniels' ear. "There may be treachery. Let me go first."

A rope ladder had been thrown over the deck rail. Livingston, however, on seeing the number in the boat, disappeared from the rail, and a moment later, when the gangway was opened between decks, he appeared there.

"Quick!" he said, "the boat is almost here. Pass Miss Armitage up first."

Dick was standing at the prow trying to keep the boat steady by holding onto the vessel's side. He saw Capt. Daniels and Charlie assisting the lady to rise, while Livingston knelt down at the gangway and caught her hands. He could not disabuse his mind of intended treachery, but at the same time he could suggest no other course than to board the vessel. A quick glance showed him how near the real danger was. The rowboat, with six or eight men in it, that had rounded the cape, was within firing distance, while the other from the bay was coming fast. It was no time to stand on ceremony. He saw Miss Armitage lifted in, and she disappeared past the gangway.

Charlie was about to follow her. He had got his hands on the gangway, when Livingston leaned out, and, pretending he was going to help him aboard, deliberately pushed him back, at the same time muttering an excuse, as if it was accidental. It was cleverly done.

Charlie fell against Capt. Daniels, and the two toppled back into the boat, almost going into the river. The same moment the gangway was closed.

The captain muttered something about his wife.

"Treachery!" cried Dick, and with a spring such as a cat might make, he caught the fender and climbed up to the deck rail. It was done as quickly as ever a sailor performed it. Some one had drawn up the rope ladder but a moment before.

Crossing the deck rail, Dick drew his revolver. He had been loath to take it out before, even for show, lest he should accidentally harm men serving the law; but now that he was confronted by villainy, he would not hesitate to use it. He saw a man on deck folding up the rope ladder. He ran to him, put the revolver to his face, and made him drop the rope. This man was the "Growler." He hurried below to tell Livingston.

The vessel was starting. The wheel had made a turn. Their object had been to rescue Miss Armitage, and go off without the others.

Dick flew to the deck rail, and, making fast an end of the rope ladder, shouted:

"Quick, Capt. Daniels! Quick, catch the ladder."

The captain had clung to the vessel's side, and thus held the boat in position.

Charlie seized the end of the rope ladder and began to ascend. The same moment two revolver shots rang out on the still night air. One came from the pursuing rowboat, and the other, Dick could have sworn, came from the interior of the *Janet*.

Was Livingston shooting out at Charlie? The villain had some reason for not wanting Charlie to escape.

"Quick, captain; quick!" repeated Dick. "There's treachery aboard of this boat, and—for mercy's sake, hurry! Those men will seize you."

Two more shots came from the water, and a third one was fired from somewhere that Dick could not tell. He was reaching down to catch Charlie's hands at the time, but the report sounded behind him, he thought.

The captain seized the rope ladder, and the small boat fell behind, showing that the vessel had already attained some speed.

Charlie was now on deck. He and Dick were leaning over the rail to help the captain, when Dick heard a footstep behind him. Before he could turn his head, Livingston appeared at his side, looked over the rail, and exclaimed, with well-affected surprise:

"What, you not aboard yet, captain! Good heavens, I didn't know that! I was looking after Miss Armitage." He caught the rope, and began to give help. "Why don't some of you down there open the gangway!" he shouted. "This is too bad! I apologize, captain—one of the men closed the gangway thinking you were not coming aboard."

He acted well. He seized Capt. Daniels' hand in spite of the latter's reluctance, as he crossed the rail, and apologized again. Then he turned to Charlie, and, grasping his hands, cried:

"Charlie, old man, a thousand congratulations. I'm glad to see you. I came all the way from New York to help you. Look out there, Nesbitt. Better stand back a little. Those fellows may shoot—I'm glad to see you, too."

"Livingston, you——" began Dick, and he was about to add "villain," when Capt. Daniels seized his arm, and whispered:

"Hush! Wait till we're out of danger."

"Oh, this is grand!" cried Livingston. "We've rescued you, Charlie, and we're all safe, and—— Look out there, Nesbitt. I'm sorry about that mistake of the sailors. I had given the engineer orders to start the vessel quick when you were all——"

His words were interrupted, not by a blow from Dick's

fist, which was imminent, but by something more serious. There was a flash on the water, followed by a sharp crack, and a bullet came whistling over the rail.

Livingston uttered a cry, threw up his hands, and fell to the deck.

The men in the rowboats fired several more shots, and called loudly for the prisoner's surrender. They threatened all the penalties of the law if the vessel did not immediately stop.

CHAPTER XVII.

Two old men—the engineer and the wheelman—had been left aboard the *Janet* when Capt. Daniels and his sailors, together with the troupe of performers, had gone ashore to effect the escape of Charlie Armitage. Capt. Daniels had also left his wife aboard, for her safety, and also to keep an eye on Livingston, whom Miss Armitage had seen fit to trust sufficiently to accept his offer to watch the vessel.

Capt. Daniels now shouted a command to the old wheelman. Then he and Dick, assisted by the "Growler," carried Livingston below, and laid him on the mate's bed.

Mrs. Daniels and Miss Armitage were greatly frightened by what had occurred. The former whispered a few words to her husband, whereupon the latter cried out:

"Who are these new sailors that have come aboard?"

"They are five men that I secured," said Livingston, faintly. "I foresaw that your own sailors would not get back in time, and I feared the escape would be defeated for the need of men to manage the vessel."

"Two of them are his own men," whispered Dick. "They are Hank and Growler."

"You'll find them all obedient and splendid fellows, captain," said Livingston. "You can dismiss them when you pick up your own hands."

Capt. Daniels could not have got along without the men provided by Livingston's thoughtfulness. He had calculated on his own sailors getting back, which, as we know, did not happen. He gave orders now, and they were promptly obeyed, Growler and Hank showing the utmost cheerfulness and desire to please him. Charlie and the captain's wife attended to the wounded man till the Growler came to relieve them. Dick went on deck, and occupied himself with keeping an eye on the sailors, and watching the doings behind the vessel.

The *Janet* had turned round in the bay, drawing Livingston's steam yacht after it, and almost upsetting the boatload of men that had tried to capture Charlie. The other rowboat had arrived pretty close, too, and its occupants fired several shots, but the *Janet* steamed out into the river, and gradually left all the pursuers behind.

Some of these shots struck the yacht, which, with steam off altogether, was being towed behind by a short line. It was such a small craft that it could not be seen from the deck of the *Janet* unless one went close to the stern rail.

The *Janet* turned the cape point, and made up the river, Capt. Daniels' intention being to get out of sight of the people before heading down the river, and thus leave a false impression as to his course.

Dick, standing at the rail, could see the shore between

the cape and the village fairly lined with the excited inhabitants. He could hear their shouts and the ringing of the prison bell.

"What about your sailors?" he asked, coming to Capt. Daniels' side, "and the performers? Do you intend to leave them ashore?"

"The performers were to be left ashore," replied Capt. Daniels, "to make their way back to New York as best they could. Don't fret about them. They have been well paid by Miss Armitage, who is a millionairess many times over."

"They came from New York with you, didn't they?"

"Yes; you see, it's safe to leave them ashore, because they are not committed in any way. The law can't touch them. They took no part in the escape. They can go quietly back to New York by train, and receive another five thousand dollars' reward from Miss Armitage. As for the sailors, I hope to pick them up down the river. If not, they will try to make their way into the State of Maine, and back to New York."

"We've had wonderful success so far."

"Yes; but don't be too sanguine," said the captain. "We have the worst to face yet—going down the river. Telegrams have already been sent along the line, and government vessel after government vessel will try to stop us. In fact, the authorities will press other boats into service. It's no joke to break open a jail, and rescue a condemned prisoner up here."

"No, indeed," said a quivering voice behind them. "I'm as frightened yet as I was when leaving the cell. How good you were, captain, and you, too, Nesbitt."

It was Charlie, who had come alongside in time to hear their words. He had changed his dress considerably. He seized and shook the hands of each. "Livingston's pretty badly hurt," he added. "He seems heart and soul in the escape. He gave his testimony reluctantly, and I believe he tried to clear me."

"They don't know as much as I do," thought Dick, as he left the others and walked up the deck. "There's no use in saying anything now when the man is helpless, but I'll watch his men, Growler and Hank, all the same."

He went to that part of the rail where he had climbed aboard. He leaned over it, just as he had done before when the three shots had been fired almost simultaneously. He then drew himself back, and examined the inner side of the deck rail by the aid of the moonlight. He found what he was looking for, and uttered a low whistle, at the same time clinching his fists.

There was a bullet imbedded in the rail!

It had been fired from the deck's side, and not from the water!

"The man is a villain," he muttered. "He meant to keep us all off the vessel but Miss Armitage. I'll—but he's helpless. He can't do anything now."

Dick went below, and had a talk with the ladies. He listened to an effusion of thanks from Miss Armitage. He soothed her fears by assuring her that the vessel was making great headway, and by morning they would be out of danger.

He went to the mate's room, and found the Growler in attendance upon Livingston. The latter appeared to be asleep.

"He's restin' easy, thank ye," said the Growler. "The

wound's in his shoulder. He'll need great quiet till we can get where there's a doctor who'll take the bullet out."

Dick went on deck again. It was plain he was not wanted in the mate's room. In fact, Livingston had begged that no fuss would be made about him. He preferred to be attended to by the Growler.

The *Janet*, having got out of sight of the village, had turned its head toward the gulf. It was now making down the river at about ten knots an hour. An unthinking person would have said that all danger was past.

But Capt. Daniels knew different, and so did Dick. There were worse dangers to meet than had surrounded them near the prison.

The yacht followed gracefully along with nobody aboard, as was supposed. Dick, looking over the stern rail, fancied once he saw a face at the cabin window of the yacht; but later he concluded he had been deceived by a fantastic trick of the moonlight and his receptivity to bad impressions concerning Livingston. He did not mention his momentary suspicion.

Having passed Qu'Appelle again, Capt. Daniels, for a reason of his own, kept the *Janet* pretty close to the southern shore. Everything seemed to be going well. The three men Livingston had picked up and Hank appeared splendid sailors. They obeyed orders cheerfully for the little there was to do. The vessel spun along on the water nicely, causing the objects on the shore to fit past as so many shadows in a dream. The mellow moonlight threw a glamour over all and made the broad river look like a great mirror, reflecting the beauties of the firmament. Other craft were on the river in plenty, but the *Janet* passed none of them at close range, except a lumber-laden barge, towed by a tug.

The beauty of the scene had Dick in raptures. He kept alone by himself on deck, because Charlie and Miss Armitage, the long-separated brother and sister, had much to say to each other in the privacy of the cabin.

"What's the matter, captain?" said Dick, presently, seeing that the *Janet* was turned shorewards.

A slight bend in the river made a bay of some width here, and the *Janet* was nearly two miles from shore.

"Look," said the captain, quietly, pointing to the land ahead.

"I see nothing," said Dick.

The captain beckoned him closer, and again pointed, at the same time whispering:

"That's the signal we arranged."

Dick looked over the bow, and saw a small blaze of light on a little hill about half a mile from the river bank.

"Are those your sailors?" he asked.

"Yes," said the captain. "They have escaped, as you see. Still, there is every danger in pulling up to shore for them."

"What's the danger?"

"The danger of pursuit," said the captain. "We're not more than eight or ten miles from Qu'Appelle. We went several miles up the river. Gillans and his men have almost to a certainty been followed."

"By the prison authorities?"

"Yes, and others. There's no doubt they're near at hand."

"Would Gillans light the signal, then?"

"Yes, through anxiety to get aboard and not knowing their danger. Hark!"

"Heavens! What's that?" exclaimed Dick.

"It's a cannon booming," said Capt. Daniels. "We're certainly in danger now."

Charlie and the two ladies came running out of the cabin.

"What's that, captain?" asked Charlie, anxiously. His face was deathly pale. The wild, haggard, frightened look of a hunted criminal was again in his face.

"Hush!" said the captain. "Keep cool. We must get out of this bay at once or we'll be hemmed in," and he immediately gave orders to the wheelsman to turn the *Janet's* head, while he signaled to the engineer "Greater speed."

"What is the danger, captain?" asked Miss Armitage.

"It is—— Hark! Good heavens! There it is again!" exclaimed Dick.

The heavy booming of a cannon came over the water, breaking the stillness of the night and terrifying those on the *Janet's* deck.

"Go below, quick," cried the captain. "This is the result of one of the telegrams sent on ahead of us by the authorities."

"But what is it?" repeated the terrified girl.

"A government boat, with orders to capture us," said the captain, solemnly. "They are searching for us. They have cannon aboard."

CHAPTER XVIII.

It seemed that they were in greater danger now than at any previous time.

Capt. Daniels secured his night glasses, and hastened to the port bow, and gazed in the direction from which the sound of the cannon had come; to his great consternation he beheld the dim outlines of two vessels coming toward them, and from different directions. One of the two was evidently the boat that fired the shot. Were they both gunboats, and had they sighted the *Janet*, and had the shot been fired at them? were questions that the captain was asking himself.

"Do you see it? How far off is it?" asked Dick, who had followed the captain, and now stood at his side.

"About two miles, I should say," replied the captain. "A convenient distance to shoot with a gun as large as that report indicates."

"Good gracious! Do they see us, do you think?"

"I fancy they do. We'll know for certain in a minute or two; but that shot was not for us."

"How's that? What did it mean, then?"

"That they mistook another vessel for us—that one to the nor'west yonder, likely. See?—and fired a shot warning them to stop. They don't try to hit a vessel with the first shot. It's generally a blank, and intended merely to warn, but if you don't take the warning—if you don't pull up and submit to being searched, they fire in earnest. The second shot always means business. I'm afraid they see us."

He spoke down to the wheelsman, and signaled to the engine room, and presently the *Janet's* speed increased considerably, and she proceeded to run closer to the southern shore. She was now about three-quarters of a mile from it.

Capt. Daniels went to his post, and Mrs. Daniels took a seat near the fore hatch to listen; Miss Armitage walked back and forth on the deck, occasionally looked over the sides and stern, and Charlie and Dick posted themselves near the after hatch. The latter had just come out of the cabin, where he had exchanged his wet clothes and shoes for an "outfit" of Capt. Daniels'. He presented a comical appearance, the clothes being too large for him in some places and too small in others. No one laughed at him, however. He had played the hero and gentleman too well for that, and it was impossible for any suit to detract from his inborn dignity—at least, in the eyes of his friends.

"Nesbitt," said Charlie, when the two were comfortably seated together, "tell me how the deuce you came to be about so handy that you have actually been the chief means of effecting my escape?"

"You have not wholly escaped yet," replied Dick, turning and letting his eyes roam around the misty horizon; but, still, I'll tell you my story."

Miss Armitage came and stood by them, while he narrated it from the time he first called at Mr. Beauchamp's office, and when he concluded she seized his hands and thanked him with tears in her eyes.

Then Charlie told that part of his story that Dick was not acquainted with, and his sister was present during parts of it, and helped him in the narration.

"It was this way, Nesbitt," he began. "Sister and I are orphans. Father left some ten or twelve millions to be divided between us. Last fall I left New York on a pleasure tour in company with two bosom friends of mine, Arthur Livingston and poor Ned Bassett. We came to Canada, and eventually found ourselves in the little town of Qu'Appelle, near which there were good fishing and shooting to be had. One day Livingston got me drunk—I had never tasted liquor before—and while in that state I quarreled with Bassett. The rest I don't know, but that night I found myself at the hotel, awakening out of a drunken stupor, to be paralyzed with the news that I was accused of murder. It was said that the three of us had been out near a cliff on the river bank, and that during a quarrel with Bassett I pushed him over the cliff. His lifeless body was found, mangled by the rocks on which it had fallen. I remembered nothing, so could deny nothing. Livingston and a man named Briggs, whom we had hired to look after the game and wait upon us generally, swore that they saw me do the deed, and the former gave his evidence with such apparent unwillingness—he cried in the box—that the jury believed him all the more readily. The judge even gave him a severe reprimand for trying to shield his friend, the prisoner. I heard that his subsequent conduct in the town was such as to belie his attitude in court. He aumsed himself while I was in trouble, and some of the townspeople threatened to run him out of the place. Well, I was sentenced to death, and confined in the jail to await my execution. I would have been hung tomorrow but for you.

"Well," continued Charlie, "my poor sister, Claire—God bless her—organized this relief expedition, as you know, and put it in charge of father's old captain—Daniels, yonder. She communicated for some weeks by letter with Mr. Beauchamp, father's old friend, and got him to promise his help. He visited me in prison and

managed to acquaint me with the plan on foot—the last resource, because the appeal to the minister of justice had failed.”

“The eggshell, Charlie——”

“Oh, yes; I’ll explain that. It was a means for me to send word to Mr. Beauchamp what cell I was being changed to, and what night the warden was to give the jailers a supper. The plan was adopted because Mr. Beauchamp was afraid to ask permission the second time to see me in the jail. I never saw a man so nervous.”

“But how did you throw it and the salmon can over the wall?”

“In the first place, the can was used to keep the eggshell from being broken by the fall. The shell was put in the can, and it was calculated upon that there was not one chance in a thousand of anyone picking up the can, and thus finding the message. Well, I had one friend in prison—a guard named O’Mara—God bless him! Did you notice how little he tried to stop me last night? He merely made a show. It was he who threw the messages over the wall, and it was he who gave the signal—cell twenty-seven—from a upstairs’ window.”

“Ah, I see.”

“Oh, Nesbitt, you don’t know what I suffered, especially when I learned of my sister’s daring plan, and heard from O’Mara that old Beauchamp was frightened, and was likely to back out of his share of it at the last moment. Thank God, you came to take his place. Hush, here’s sister. She doesn’t yet know that you heard proof of my innocence. I’m waiting to give her the glad surprise when——”

“Mr. Nesbitt,” said Miss Armitage, who had been walking up and down on the watch, and now stopped before the corner in which they were seated, “we owe everything to you——”

“I think we owe most to the musicians,” said Dick, laughing.

“It was funny,” said Charlie. “Such music I never heard. I could have laughed only for my terror—and poor Gillans and his sailors. Oh, they’ll all get safe back to New York, and sister and I’ll double their reward, too.”

“The main obstacle,” said Miss Armitage, “was Mr. Beauchamp’s sudden fright. He even wrote his message to me on birch bark, lest——”

He stopped short, and Miss Armitage screamed, as a sudden flash of light fell upon them, dispersing the fog, illuminating the deck, lighting up their pale, startled faces, and making everything about them seem brighter than day.

“The searchlight!” cried Charlie, starting up from his chair in terror.

There was the sound of footsteps on the deck. Capt. Daniels came running down the passage, pale and breathless, just as the light went out.

“They are upon us,” he cried. “It is the government vessel.”

“Where?” asked Dick, staring around.

“Over the starboard bow,” was the answer. “There it is again—the searchlight, and it’s on us.”

Sure enough, from the direction indicated came the light, though in its blinding glare the government vessel itself could not be seen.

At that instant it flashed upon Dick that the wisest thing he could possibly do to avoid treachery on the part

of Livingston and his men would be to fasten down the hatches now, while they were all below, so that they could not possibly get out, or interfere with the captain in any way; to think was to act with Dick; he excused himself to the ladies, and hurried to the after hatch, and fastened that down securely, saying to himself all the while what a lucky thing it was that he happened to think about it. After assuring himself that the hatch could not be opened from the under side, he went forward and bolted down the forward hatch in a like manner, all the while being careful not to make any noise. After this had been done, he hastened to Capt. Daniels’ side in the wheelhouse, and told him of the precautions he had taken.

CHAPTER XIX.

Livingston and his men soon discovered that they were imprisoned and could not reach the deck, and they created a great rumpus by pounding furiously on the hatches and demanding that they be raised, threatening all the time to burn the ship if they were not opened immediately.

The excitement on the *Janet* was more intense than at any time since it had steamed out of the little inlet east of the village of Qu’Appelle, pursued by the rowboats carrying the frantic jail officials and others.

Miss Armitage was on her knees, crying, with her head resting in the lap of her faithful friend, Mrs. Daniels. Dick and Capt. Daniels were up at the wheelhouse talking together in quick, disjointed sentences, the latter of the two occasionally sending signals down to the engineer, or speaking to Peter.

He was heading the *Janet* to the northeast, for since the searchlight had vanished he had a faint hope he might elude the vigilance of the gunboat. The fog was not so thick as it had been, yet it impeded the vision and deceived the eye as to distances and the size and form of objects. But it was a help to the anxious ones on the *Janet’s* deck.

The excitement between decks was even greater than that above. Livingston and his men had heard the noises on deck, and had immediately thrown open the gangway to look out. They were just in time to see the second flash of the searchlight.

“Great thunder!” the Growler cried, when it flashed in his face, dazzling and bewildering him.

Livingston’s expression of feeling took a different form. He uttered a low curse, and then became deadly pale.

“Do you hear, men?” he cried, fiercely. “Do you see the position I—you are in here, prisoners? I tell you that something must—good heavens! We must get out, if we have to blow the blamed vessel to pieces. It means for me the——”

He was going to add the word “gallows,” but stopped suddenly, recollecting that Growler and Briggs alone had positive knowledge of his guilt in the Bassett case.

“Men,” he repeated, “we must force a passage to the deck. I’m not going to be caught in a death trap like this. Look, look! I can see the vessel yonder.”

“Yes,” said the Growler, “an’ she’s headin’ this way, or I’m a dummy.”

Presently those on deck heard a shout, apparently coming from the water.

Both Dick and Capt. Daniels went to the starboard deck rail and looked over. There, beneath them, was

Arthur Livingston, standing in the open gangway, looking up.

"Captain," he began, pitching his voice to the key of his former polite tone, "I want you to do me a favor—to be good enough to run the *Janet* north to land—it's only a few miles—and let us fellows land. We will——"

"Can't see the point, Livingston," said Capt. Daniels, with provoking coolness, preparing to light a stumpy old black pipe.

"Listen, captain. I——"

"No use. The case is closed."

"Do you mean you won't?" cried Livingston, fiercely. "Won't you put us ashore, or, I say, let us have your rowboat. I tell you, captain, there's danger for all of us here. You'd better let Nesbitt and me take the rowboat and row Miss Armitage and Charlie to the northern shore, and——"

The captain laughed in his face.

"Do you mean to refuse me, Capt. Daniels—to refuse to put me ashore or let me escape?" cried Livingston, in a tone that bespoke both ferocity and fear.

"I do," said the captain, quietly, leaning on the rail, and looking calmly down at him. "You'll stay just where you are."

Miss Armitage touched Capt. Daniels on the shoulder. She had heard Livingston's pleading, and remembered only that he had professed friendship for her brother.

"Captain," said she, in her sweet, low voice, "do steer to the northern shore, as Mr. Livingston asks, and let him and his companions disembark. It is not fair that they should have to run further risks with us."

The poor girl was anxious to get rid of his disagreeable company.

"Well, if you say so, Miss Armitage," replied the captain, politely, "I must certainly——"

"Yes, yes. It won't take long," added Livingston, below. "Do this for me."

"Stop!" cried Dick. "Miss Armitage, it is necessary to keep Arthur Livingston just where he is."

"Why, Mr. Nesbitt?"

"To save your brother from the scaffold."

He spoke loudly so that Livingston would hear him.

"Why, what do you mean, Mr. Nesbitt?" she asked, in astonishment.

"I mean," said Dick, "that this man, Arthur Livingston, the villain of villains, committed the crime of which your brother was wrongfully convicted. He murdered Ned Bassett."

"Oh, merciful Heaven!"

Mrs. Daniels stepped forward in time to catch the fainting girl. The surprise, the shock, the joy of finding proof of her brother's innocence, which she had ever stoutly maintained, proved too much for nerves already weakened by fatigue, fright, suspense and want of rest.

Livingston heard the words, and immediately left the gangway with a loud and fearful oath that enveloped a murderous threat. The animal part of him was again in the ascendant. He was a lion aroused to fury.

"She's coming!" cried Capt. Daniels, looking through his glasses at the government vessel. "Look, Nesbitt," handing Dick the glasses; "what are we to do?"

Flash! Boom! The familiar low growl of a cannon startled all on deck, and made poor Charlie tremble like a leaf.

"The warning signal!" cried Dick. "And—hark! What's that?"

It was a scarcely less ominous sound than that made by the cannon. It was a simultaneous crashing and hammering at both ends of the vessel. The men below, maddened into frenzy, were trying to break in the hatches.

"Quick," said Capt. Daniels. "Guard them as well as you can with these revolvers—you and Charlie. Miss Armitage, you and my wife get into the cabin, I must go to the wheelhouse."

He was soon at his post, giving orders to the wheelman and the engineer.

Dick Nesbitt went to the after hatch, where the crashing noises were the loudest. He stood ready, with revolver in hand, to hold back the men.

He glanced toward the government boat, and saw it looming up larger in the fast-dispersing fog. There was no doubt now about its course. It had sighted and recognized the *Janet*, and was bearing down upon it at full speed.

Suddenly, to Dick's surprise, he saw the *Janet's* head being turned south, as if to meet the approaching vessel.

"Good heavens! What is this?" he cried, and he ran up the deck, and called to Capt. Daniels:

"Captain!" he shouted, "what do you mean? You are steering straight for our pursuer."

"Captain," yelled Charlie, coming to Dick's side, "what on earth do you mean? Are you going to meet the government boat?"

Capt. Daniels turned round, and looked down at them from his elevated perch.

"Yes, boys," he said, quietly. "I am going to meet them."

"What?"

"It's our only hope. Look there!" He pointed down the deck.

The two youths turned and saw four men—Livingston, the Growler and two sailors—standing in the passage near the cabin. They had smashed the after hatch cover just after Dick left it.

"Heavens, they'll attack us," said Charlie.

"Hush!" said Dick. "Look!"

The whole crowd of ruffians, instead of proceeding to overpower Capt. Daniels and his friends, and seize the vessel, were standing stock-still near the cabin, overwhelmed with astonishment, fright and even terror. Some of them were watching the government boat approaching, and others were staring at the spectacle of the *Janet* going to meet it. All of them understood the hopelessness and helplessness of their position.

"Look there," said Capt. Daniels, pointing to them. "That's why I've done it. Don't take on so, Charlie. Your chances may be better than if we had kept up the race. You, Nesbitt, should hide," he added, in a whisper.

Not a movement did the ruffians make. Nothing did they do but confer quietly among themselves and stare at the gunboat. Their case was hopeless, the eyes of the government officers being already on them, for the big vessel was now at hand. Livingston became so weak that he sat down.

The government boat drew up and stopped. Its captain called to the master of the *Janet*.

Capt. Daniels quietly surrendered his vessel with all on board.

Five minutes later the two craft were steaming up the river together.

None wore handcuffs but Charlie Armitage and Livingston.

* * * * *

The sequel to the events narrated would form a story in itself, but to those who have followed us this far it need not be told in detail. They can gather it from what little we have to say. It involves no less than three public trials, all held in Qu'Appelle shortly after the day on which Livingston was arrested.

The first of these was the new trial of Charlie Armitage, which was granted on representations made to the government by several prominent and influential persons. It was little more than a formality—owing chiefly to Briggs' confession—and followed shortly upon a reprieve obtained by Mr. Beauchamp, who started telegraphic communication with Ottawa an hour after the vessels arrived at Qu'Appelle. Needless to say that Charlie was acquitted. The evidence of Dick and Briggs cleared him, and laid the guilt upon the proper person.

The second trial was that of the jail breakers, or those of them that could be found, Gillans and the sailors having escaped, which included Capt. Daniels, Dick and Miss Armitage herself. To the surprise of all, even the accused parties themselves, they got off very lightly, having to pay only a nominal fine. The sympathy of the public and even the court was with them. The government prosecutor and the judge seemed anxious to atone for the terrible mistake that had nearly sent an innocent man to the scaffold, and they openly showed sympathy for the brave and beautiful girl, and the chivalrous young man and old captain, who had taken the law into their own hands to prevent a miscarriage of justice. The judge even went so far as to say, with tears in his eyes: "God bless you, miss. It seems a bad example to set, but I fear I would have done the same myself to save an innocent brother. May Heaven always protect you and your two chivalrous friends. I fine you each ten dollars," whereat the court cheered lustily. There were bonfires lit in the streets of Qu'Appelle that night, and so popular did the judge become that when he was going away next day a large mob unhitched the horses from the hack and hauled him along the street to the station, amid deafening cheers.

Livingston's trial took place a month after the rescue party returned to New York. He was sentenced to be hanged on Briggs' testimony and the Growler's confession. It may be some comfort to a few of our readers to know that the sentence was duly carried out. Of the other ruffians, only Growler, Hank and Briggs were punished. They were sent to prison for several years each. The

remaining four were not even tried, because, through the kindness of heart of Miss Armitage, no charge was laid against them.

We might here mention a fact that would go to show there may be some good left even in perverted human nature. These same four sailors afterwards sent Miss Armitage a present, to which was attached a paper signed by them, bearing upon it the protestation of their undying gratitude and esteem for her, as well as the assurance that her clemency had made them better men.

Two things remain to be told.

Some time after our friends returned to New York, Miss Armitage and Charlie collected the whole party—the musicians, acrobats, jugglers, sailors and all—at their magnificent home on Fifth Avenue, and gave them a fine banquet, after which she awarded to each a valuable present. Neither Capt. Daniels nor Dick was there, however. Miss Armitage would not think of rewarding them in that way. They had done too much.

The other thing worth telling is that the Armitages forced Dick to accept a monetary present; but, like the judge's sentence at their trial, it was a mere matter of show, for before they arrived in New York, Dick and Miss Armitage were engaged to be married. Charlie having let out the secret message of the cell, and thus precipitated matters; and they were thus like one family.

Charlie was very proud of his achievement as a match-maker. He had told the secret of Dick's love to his sister, and then, in spite of her blushes, had coaxed her secret out of her. He went to Dick and told him Claire wanted him. When he got them together he cornered them up and apprised them both of their mutual feelings. That settled the matter. Dick's objection of his poverty and Miss Armitage's social standing were laughed aside.

To-day there is in the United States a very wealthy firm known as Armitage & Nesbitt, who deal in such commodities as railroads and steamboats and the like, and one of the partners is the brother-in-law of the other. One of them always refers gratefully to the other as "The man who risked his life many times to save me from the scaffold."

THE END.

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